

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANIA LEGISLATION: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article is to bring to public attention the view of managers from Romanian state organizations on the potential risks related to public procurement procedures, in the current context of the legislative framework. The research aims to identify and gain a deep understanding of the concerns, challenges and obstacles these professionals face in the procurement process, which is often complicated and subject to rigorous scrutiny. The purpose of the article is to provide recommendations based on the data collected, which will contribute to the improvement of the risk management framework in public procurement and to increase the awareness and training of managers to face the challenges in this field. In this way, the aim is not only a better understanding of the current landscape, but also the facilitation of possible legislative or procedural developments that increase efficiency and Clarity and openness in the public procurement process in Romania.

Keywords: management, public procurement, legal framework, procedures.

1. Introduction

Public procurement management in Romania plays a crucial role in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of spending public funds. It directly influences the quality of services and goods purchased by government entities, having a significant impact on economic development and citizens' trust in state institutions. The public procurement system is not just a set of rules to follow, but a complex mechanism that must be managed professionally to ensure the efficiency of

spending public money and to bring the best value for money to the community (Cook, 2015). Effective practices in this area can contribute to substantial savings in the budget, to the improvement of public services and, ultimately, to greater trust in state institutions. Transparency is crucial: contract details, requirements and selection criteria must be clearly defined and accessible, thus ensuring that all economic operators have an overview of how they can participate in and win public contracts (Murray, 2009). The process includes submitting bids, evaluating them according to predetermined and objective criteria, and finally awarding the contract to the most advantageous bidder. Throughout this process, contracting authorities must carefully monitor compliance with procurement rules and applicable legislation. Any deviation from these rules can lead to irregularities and affect the integrity of the entire system. For this reason, appeals and redressal mechanisms are in place to address any possible procedural violations. Public procurement systems, both in Romania and globally, represent a vital bridge between the private sector and the government, having the potential to direct the economy and support the implementation of public policies. These systems are not only channels through which government authorities procure goods and services necessary for their daily operation, but also strategic tools that can positively influence economic and social development. Once well established and effectively implemented, public procurement practices can have a significant impact on the labor market by generating new employment opportunities, especially when contracts are also accessible to small and medium-sized companies, which are the backbone of many economies (Popescu, 2017). By favoring businesses that innovate and adopt sustainability practices, governments can use public procurement as a powerful incentive to improve environmental performance and promote research and development. For example, tender criteria can be structured in such a way as to favor green solutions, thus supporting companies that invest in environmentally friendly technologies and contributing to the achievement of the country's environmental goals. In addition, public procurement can be used to encourage innovation by requiring products and services that are not only up to current standards, but that bring innovation and added value. In the international context, public procurement becomes even more relevant. By committing to buy from international sources, states can encourage cross-border cooperation, support international trade and contribute to global growth. Procurement systems can also serve as a barometer of public sector transparency and integrity. Implementing fair and transparent procedures in public procurement is essential for preventing corruption and building public trust in government. Improving public procurement systems is a strategic public policy that can have multiplier effects on the economy and society. As governments recognize and capitalize on these advantages, public procurement can become an increasingly powerful tool in achieving a wide range of national and international objectives. The current regulatory framework in the field of public procurement places particular emphasis on the integrity of the process, by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the contracting authority. This implies not only compliance with legal bidding and award procedures, but also constant monitoring to prevent and identify any situations that could lead to conflicts of interest. Transparency is key in this process, and this is maintained through rigorous documentation of all decisions and open communication with all relevant stakeholders. Regular audits and the possibility of

appeal and review of decisions are also essential components of a sound regulatory framework.

The constant updating of rules in the field of public procurement is crucial to maintain a system aligned not only with legislative changes, but also with the most effective practices at the international level. The adoption of global best practices is essential in boosting and strengthening integrity standards. This means not only keeping pace with innovations in procurement procedures, but also anticipating and integrating technological, economic and social developments that may influence these processes. By harmonizing national legislation with international directives and recommendations, such as those issued by the European Union or other international bodies, public authorities can ensure a public procurement framework that is as robust and transparent as those of the most developed democracies (Schneider, 2005). This requires a constant commitment to transparency, accountability and efficiency. A well-regulated system has multiple benefits. First, it prevents conflicts of interest and combats corruption, which can have devastating effects on the economy and erode public trust in state institutions. Such a system also promotes a fair competitive environment where all bidders, regardless of their size, can compete on an equal footing for public contracts. Moreover, the efficient use of public resources is not only a matter of economics, but also an ethical responsibility towards the citizens, who are the real financiers of these projects through the taxes and fees they pay. A transparent and open system helps to ensure that funds are spent judiciously and that funded projects correspond to the real needs of society (Altayyar and Kerridge-Beaumont, 2016). In addition, regular updates and reviews of the system must be done in a consultative manner, involving actors from various sectors, including civil society and the private sector, to ensure that any changes to legislation or procedures are well founded, relevant and enforceable.

Therefore, a normative framework in continuous adaptation and improvement not only meets the legal and ethical needs of the moment, but also becomes a catalyst for innovation and progress in public administration and in the whole society.

2. Review of specialized literature

The public procurement management is an interweaving of complex activities that require a wide range of skills and expertise, adapted to the specifics of each phase of the process. Within this mechanism, the attributions and tasks must be carefully distributed, respecting the principles of specialization and complementarity, to ensure the efficiency and legality of the whole endeavor. At the level of the contracting authority, the organizational structures must be designed to correspond to the different stages of the procurement process, each with its own specific requirements. This may include phases such as procurement planning, drafting award documents, publishing tenders, tender evaluation, contract negotiation and post-award contract management (Akbar and Vujčić, 2014). Within these structures, the various roles can be filled by specialists in law, economics, engineering, technology and other relevant fields, each bringing a level of expertise vital to correctly interpreting legislation, evaluating bids, identifying the most advantageous proposals and managing contracts effectively. In addition to technical skills, the ability of these structures to work in a coordinated manner is

essential, as tasks may overlap or be interdependent. Collaboration and communication are therefore crucial to prevent errors, optimize resources and shorten processing times, contributing to achieving public procurement objectives in the most cost-effective way (Hanak and Muchova, 2015). For example, procurement specialists will work closely with finance to ensure that budgets are met, while legal experts will ensure that all procedures follow applicable legislation. At the same time, technical specialists will evaluate the specifications and technical compliance of the offers. In addition, continuous monitoring and evaluation is necessary to ensure alignment with the initial goals and adjust the process if necessary. In this regard, feedback from suppliers and users, as well as process performance data, can be used to continuously improve procurement practices.

Each element of the system plays an essential role in ensuring the integrity, efficiency and transparency of this process (Lazar, 2010):

The regulatory authority is responsible for creating, updating and interpreting the legal framework governing public procurement processes. It includes the laws, rules, directives and guidelines that ensure that procurement processes are carried out in a fair and equitable manner. The regulatory authority also has the role of facilitating the formation and dissemination of good practices, providing training and support for contracting authorities and economic operators.

Contracting authorities are the government entities or public institutions that initiate and lead the procurement process. They identify needs, prepare procurement documentation, evaluate bids and administer contracts.

Economic operators are the firms, companies or commercial entities that respond to the requests for offers issued by the contracting authorities. They participate in auctions and competitions to win contracts for the supply of goods, services or works needed by state institutions. To be competitive, economic operators must demonstrate that they can meet the technical requirements and that they offer the best value for money.

The supervisors of the system are the monitoring and auditing agencies and bodies, such as the Court of Accounts, the National Authority for the Regulation and Monitoring of Public Procurement and other similar institutions. Their role is to oversee and evaluate how public money is spent, ensure compliance with legislation and identify any irregularities or abuses in the system. These entities may also have sanctioning powers, being able to recommend improvements or apply penalties if violations of the law are identified.

Through the cooperation of these components, the SAP strives to ensure that public procurement is carried out in a way that best serves the interests of citizens, guaranteeing the responsible and efficient use of public funds and supporting economic and social development (Emilian, 2003). The institutional component within the public procurement system is essential for the efficient and compliant operation of the entire procurement process. This complex structure of institutions has the role of supervising, regulating and facilitating the activities arising from spending public funds and making purchases (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2008):

1. The Ministry of Finance: through the Public Procurement Agency (A.A.P.) and the Directorate of National Economy Finances, Capital Expenditures and Public Procurement, has an essential role in establishing policies and strategies in the field of public procurement. A.A.P. has the responsibility to standardize and improve procurement procedures to ensure efficient and transparent use of state resources, while the specified Directorate is responsible for overseeing and

planning capital expenditure and public procurement processes, ensuring that they are consistent with the economic objectives of the country.

2. The Financial Control and Review Service: acts as an internal audit court, evaluating the legality and regularity of financial operations. This service plays a preventive role, as well as an inspection role, controlling whether public funds are used properly and whether public procurement procedures are followed correctly, according to the regulations in force.

3. The Court of Accounts: is an external audit body that oversees how public money is spent and guarantees financial accountability. By examining the accounts and financial activities of state institutions, the Court of Accounts ensures that public resources are administered efficiently and according to the law, providing recommendations for improving financial management and reporting any detected irregularities.

4. The State Treasury: plays a key role in managing the State's liquidity and cash flows, ensuring that the funds required for public procurement are available and are properly released. The Treasury is responsible for monitoring and reporting payments and receipts, thus contributing to sound fiscal management (Șerban, 2011).

These entities work together to create an environment in which procurement procedures are conducted in a manner that promotes integrity, competitiveness, transparency and fairness. Through their combined efforts, these institutions contribute to increasing citizens' trust in the way public resources are used and in the state's ability to serve public interests (Aldenius and Khan, 2017).

The head of a public entity has a crucial responsibility in establishing and implementing a rigorous risk management process, which is vital to ensure that the organization achieves its objectives in an efficient and effective manner. This process must be well structured and include several key stages to be effective (Androniceanu, 2006):

1. Context analysis: This is the initial phase in which the internal and external environment of the contracting authority is mapped. Factors such as the political, economic, social and technological climate are examined, as well as domestic resources and institutional capacity. Understanding this context is critical to anticipating how risks may impact the entity's objectives.

2. Risk identification: This step involves the recognition of potential threats or opportunities that may impact the achievement of the entity's objectives. Risks can come from various sources, including legislative changes, economic fluctuations, technological problems or natural disasters.

3. Analysis and assessment of risks: After identifying the risks, the next step is to analyze and assess them. This means determining the likelihood of each risk occurring and the impact it could have on the organization. This step helps to prioritize risks according to their severity and allocate resources to manage them.

4. Establishing risk management measures: Once the risks have been assessed, actions are determined to mitigate, transfer, accept or avoid them. This may include developing business continuity plans, taking out insurance, implementing tighter internal controls, or training employees to handle unexpected situations.

5. Periodic review and monitoring: Risk management is a dynamic process and requires continuous adjustments. Periodic review and monitoring of progress is essential to ensure that risk mitigation measures are effective and that the

organization remains aligned with its objectives. It is important to record any changes in the risk profile and update risk management plans accordingly.

Implementing such a risk management process requires organization-wide commitment and a culture that recognizes the importance of proactive risk management. Ultimately, the process helps protect the public entity against unforeseen events and maximize opportunities, ensuring prudent and responsible stewardship of public resources. Implementing effective risk management in a public entity requires an integrated and collaborative approach that includes all levels of the organization, from senior management to executive staff. Each member of the organization plays a crucial role in identifying and managing the risks associated with procurement activities. In order to have a robust risk management system, it is essential that the following elements are integrated into the process (Jolien, 2023):

1. Clarification of organizational objectives: Risk management must be aligned with both the strategic and operational objectives of the organization. In this way, risks are assessed and managed in the context of their impact on the achievement of these objectives.

2. Staff training and involvement: All employees must be aware of the importance of risk management and be properly trained to recognize and report potential risks. A strong commitment from superiors and an organizational culture that values transparency and communication of potential risks are essential.

3. Use of best practices: Adopting customary practices or industry best practices can help improve procurement processes. This means learning from the experiences of other organizations and applying these lessons to avoid mistakes and improve efficiency.

4. Continuous process development and improvement: Specific procurement activities must be subject to continuous evaluation and improvement. Through regular monitoring and review, processes can be adjusted to better manage risks and adapt to changes in the business environment or legal regulations.

5. Risk management as part of the decision-making process: Procurement decisions must include risk considerations. Risk analysis should be an integral part of the decision-making process so that it is possible to choose options that offer the best balance between cost, benefit and risk.

6. Monitoring and review: The risk management system should be monitored and reviewed periodically to ensure that it is still relevant and effective. This may involve adjusting risk plans according to changes within the organization or its external environment.

In conclusion, effective risk management in public procurement requires a team effort and commitment at all levels of the organization. By implementing such an approach, public entities can reduce the likelihood of encountering significant problems and improve efficiency and effectiveness in achieving procurement objectives, thereby contributing to better stewardship of public funds and promoting responsible governance.

3. Research and method

The main purpose of this article is to explore and understand the perceptions of managers from various public institutions in Romania regarding the risks associated with public procurement procedures, in the context of existing legal

regulations. The current legislation establishes a series of general principles of the public procurement process, such as: *optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities. transparency, liberalization and expansion of international trade, free movement of goods, assumption of responsibility in public procurement procedures.*

P1- Principle *Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities* aimed at making the use of public funds more efficient and mitigating the risks associated with the procurement processes of government entities, it can be implemented through a series of strategic and tactical measures. First, the implementation of competitive bidding procedures provides a framework in which multiple suppliers can compete, not only achieving the best financial offer, but also stimulating innovation and quality. By using criteria based on economic value, contracting authorities can evaluate bids not only based on initial cost, but also taking into account factors such as durability, operational efficiency, maintenance costs, and even long-term environmental impact. Thus, not only are budgetary savings achieved by selecting the offer with the best quality-price ratio, but sustainable and responsible practices from a social and ecological point of view are also promoted. Thus, transparency becomes an effective tool in preventing corruption and conflicts of interest, which contributes to a significant reduction of risks.

P2 - The principle *Clarity and openness in the public procurement process* represents an essential pillar for ensuring a fair and transparent environment in the allocation of public contracts. This principle is based on open communication and dissemination of information regarding procurement opportunities, participation requirements, evaluation criteria and selection processes. In practice, this means that the details of each tender must be accessible and easy to understand for all potential bidders, which involves publishing tender notices in ways that ensure wide circulation and using clear and precise language in tender documentation. auction. On the other hand, the principle of non-discrimination aims to promote open and fair competition, where all bidders have equal opportunities to compete for public contracts, without being advantaged or disadvantaged based on illegitimate criteria such as geographical location, ownership structure, size company or other characteristics. The conditions for participation in tenders must be neutral and not favor certain bidders. In addition, it must be ensured that relevant information is provided to all participants at the same time and that no interested party receives preferential treatment.

P3 - *The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods* constitutes a fundamental principle within the open and globalized market economy. This involves removing barriers that limit international trade and favoring global economic integration. Through the freedom of establishment, companies have the opportunity to expand their operations abroad, establish subsidiaries or representative offices, thus promoting economic and technological diversification. The free provision of services across borders allows providers to operate outside their home country, providing services without being restricted by national protectionist regulations. This opens up the market to a greater variety of offerings and stimulates competition, which can lead to improved quality and lower costs for consumers. Mutual recognition of products and services means that a good or service legally marketed in one country can also be sold in other countries without the need for new approval or certification. This is a key

aspect of free trade, eliminating double regulation and facilitating a faster and more efficient flow of goods and services.

P4 - *The concept of accepting the obligation* refers to the firm commitment of those involved in public procurement to fulfill their duties and to assume responsibility for the activities carried out within this process. This principle implies the clear and precise definition of the roles of each member of the procurement team, according to the legal provisions in force and the established internal regulations, such as the Regulation of the Working Group for Public Procurement, which is adopted by the contracting authority. In practice, this concept is manifested by creating and maintaining a work environment in which everyone, from those in leadership positions to the executive staff, understands the importance of their role and is trained to act ethically and responsibly. By implementing this principle, the aim is to ensure a high standard of professionalism, where decisions are made based on objective, transparent and fair criteria, without inappropriate external or internal influences.

The gaps identified in the detailed analysis of procurement procedures under structural financing include:

R1 - *Unreasonable reduction of the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent*: the unjustified reduction of the periods allocated for the submission of offers, which may follow the issuance of a notice of intent, is only permitted if the published notice of intent explicitly contains and complete all the qualification and selection criteria as well as the award criteria which must be available in the call for tenders. Therefore, any shortening of deadlines must be justified by the full presence of the necessary information in the initial notice of intent, ensuring transparency and giving all potential bidders the opportunity to adequately prepare for the bidding process. This practice is intended to maintain a balance between the need to complete procurement in an efficient time and the right of participants to an open and fair competitive process.

R2 - *Issuing qualification and selection requirements that favor certain parties, are not sufficiently elaborated or are partially presented*: represents a significant problem in the public procurement process, as it can lead to the unfair exclusion of potential competitors and also, may call into question the integrity and objectivity of the entire procurement procedure. To avoid these situations and to ensure fairness and transparency, qualification and selection criteria should be clearly formulated, based on objective principles and directly proportional to the complexity and specific requirements of the contract in question. They must allow all interested economic operators, who have the real capacity to fulfill the contract, the possibility to participate in the tender. It also requires effective and detailed communication of these criteria so that all potential tenderers are fully aware of the contracting authority's requirements and expectations.

R3 - *Selecting a fast tender process for awarding the contract*: this is a decision that should be taken with caution. It is essential that compressed tendering or negotiation procedures involving prior notice are initiated only in circumstances where the need for speed is not the consequence of actions or omissions on the part of the contracting authority. Also, there must be a convincing justification for the invoked state of emergency that legitimizes the deviation from the standard deadlines. Such procedures should be reserved for exceptional cases, where time is a critical factor and cannot be reasonably anticipated or controlled, and the urgent need to proceed with the procurement is justified by

unforeseeable situations affecting the smooth running of public services or of other vital functions. This approach is intended to ensure that the entire process remains fair, competitive and transparent despite time constraints.

R4 - Refusal to postpone the deadline set for the presentation of tender proposals, following the request submitted by the potential bidders: such a decision should be well substantiated by the contracting authority and be based on objective criteria, in order not to discourage fair participation and competitive bidding. Ideally, any request for an extension of the deadline for the submission of tenders should be carefully assessed, taking into account whether the circumstances presented by the tenderers justify such a change. Factors such as the potential benefits of increased competitiveness by allowing more time to prepare a quality bid, or exceptional situations preventing multiple bidders from completing their proposals on time, may be good reasons to allow an extension. It is also crucial that the procurement process remains transparent and clearly communicates the reasons behind any decisions, including refusal to extend deadlines. This helps maintain trust between authorities and bidders and ensures an open and fair public procurement process.

In the context of the objectives formulated for the academic investigation, the following objectives were established:

1. Examining public procurement processes under the magnifying glass of the legislation in force;
2. Exploring the inherent risks in public procurement;
3. Detecting the connections between public procurement mechanisms and the risks associated with them.

Based on specialized literature and own analysis, the following assumptions were designed to support the scientific research approach:

Hypothesis 1: There is a strong correlation between P1- Principle "Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities." and R2 – "Issuance of qualification and selection requirements that favor certain parties, are not sufficiently elaborated or are partially presented.";

Hypothesis 2: There is a very high significant positive relationship between P1- Principle "Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities." and R3 - "Selecting a fast bidding process for awarding the contract.";

Hypothesis 3: There is a very significant positive relationship between P2 - Principle "Clarity and openness in the public procurement process" and R1 - "Decreasing without valid reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent.";

Hypothesis 4: P3 - "The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods." and R1 - "Decreasing without valid reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent.";

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between P3 - "The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods." and R4 - "Refusal to postpone the deadline set for the presentation of bid proposals, following the request submitted by the potential bidders.";

Hypothesis 6: Between P4 - "Concept of acceptance of the obligation" and R1 - "Decreasing without good reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent."

Data collection for the study was conducted between March 2023 and August 2023 using a questionnaire as a research instrument. The collection process resulted in 472 questionnaires considered valid and suitable for analysis. In the processing stage, the collected data were entered and examined using the specialized software for statistical analysis S.P.S.S. (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). During the analysis, to determine and evaluate the relationships between the study variables, the Spearman rho Correlation Coefficient, which is a rank-based measure of statistical association, was calculated. This methodology allows us to understand the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous or ordinal variables, thus providing valuable insights into the dynamics of the interaction between the different elements analyzed in the research. Calculation of the Spearman rho correlation coefficient within the S.P.S.S. it not only provides the value of the coefficient, but also its statistical significance, allowing researchers to determine whether observed relationships between variables are statistically significant and thus validate research hypotheses with a high degree of confidence. To verify the hypotheses formulated in the scientific research, the Spearman rho correlation coefficient was used, a widespread and extremely effective statistical tool in measuring the degree of association between two variables. This coefficient is particularly useful in the context of ordered or non-normally distributed data, allowing the analysis of monotonic relationships between variables.

In implementing the analysis, the S.P.S.S software was used. (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), the choice of this program being motivated by its ability to handle large data sets and provide accurate and complex statistical results. The Spearman rho correlation coefficient was calculated and presented in Table 1, which was included in the study to illustrate and substantiate the results obtained.

Following the analysis of the Spearman rho correlation coefficient, we can observe the following correlations between public procurement procedures and their specific risks:

1. An extremely strong and statistically significant link is found between the principle *Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities (P1)* and *Issuing qualification and selection requirements that favor certain parties, are not sufficiently elaborated or are partially presented (R2)*, with a correlation of 0.92, having 472 degrees of freedom and a statistical significance below the threshold of 0.001. This is illustrated in Figure 1 by the scatterplot, where the concentration of points is quite narrow, signaling a solid correlation ($R^2=0.81$). The slope of the data distribution is close to a straight line, suggesting a directly proportional relationship between the variables rather than a nonlinear one. Therefore, the validity of Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Table 1. Spearman rho correlation coefficient values

Correlations					
Spearman's rho		R1 - Unreasonable reduction of the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent	R2 - Issuing qualification and selection requirements that favor certain parties, are not sufficiently elaborated or are partially presented	R3 - Selecting a fast tender process for awarding the contract	R4 - Refusal to postpone the deadline set for the presentatio n of tender proposals, following the request submitted by the potential bidders
P1 - Principle Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities	correlation coefficient	.932**	.921**	.888**	.823**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	472	472	472	472
P2 - The principle Clarity and openness in the public procurement process	correlation coefficient	.932**	1.000	.800**	.784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	472	472	472	472
P3 - The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods constitutes	correlation coefficient	.828**	.800**	1.000	.899**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	472	472	472	472
P4 - The concept of accepting the obligation	correlation coefficient	.812**	.784**	.895**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	472	472	472	472

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

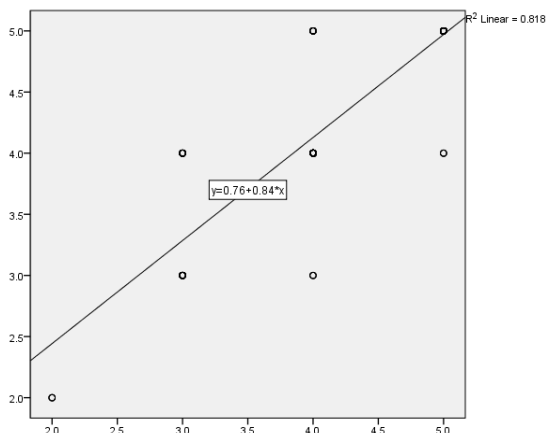


Figure 1. Scatter plot – correlation between P1- Principle "Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities." and R2 – "Issuance of qualification and selection requirements that favor certain parties, are not sufficiently elaborated or are partially presented."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

2. According to the data in Table 1, an extremely strong and significant connection is noted between P1 - *Optimization of spending of state funds and reduction of dangers for procurement entities* and R3 - *Selecting a fast bidding process for awarding the contract* ($\rho=0.888$, $df=472$, $p<0.001$). Looking at the Scatterplot in Figure 2, it is evident that the points are closely clustered, suggesting a robust correlation ($R^2=0.67$). The path of the points on the graph tends to form a straight line, a sign that the relationship between the two variables is direct, and not curved. Thus, it is confirmed that Hypothesis 2 is supported by the data.

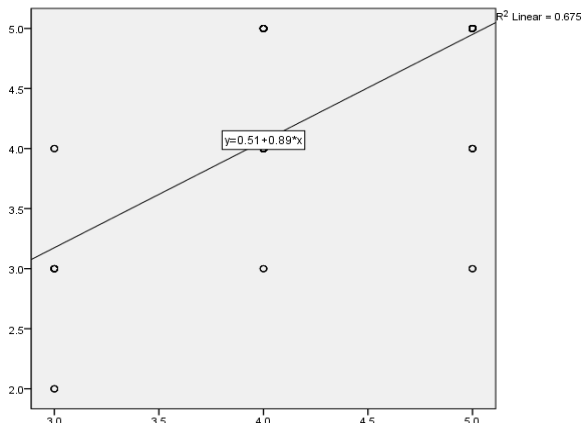


Figure 2. Scatter diagram - the correlation between P1- Principle "Optimizing the spending of state funds and reducing the dangers for procurement entities." and R3 - "Selecting a fast bidding process for awarding the contract."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

3. There is a very strong and statistically significant association between P2 - *Clarity and openness in the public procurement process* and R1 - *Decreasing without good reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent* ($\rho=0.932$, $df=472$, $p<0.001$). As can be seen in the scatterplot in Figure 3, there is a compact clustering of the data, thus suggesting a strong correlation. The slope of the data distribution is close to a perfectly straight line, suggesting a directly proportional relationship between the two variables, rather than a curved relationship. It can be stated that Hypothesis 3 is fully validated.

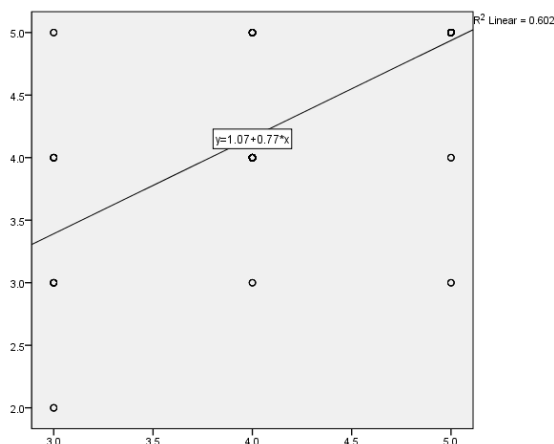


Figure 3. Scatter diagram - between P2 - Principle "Clarity and openness in the public procurement process" and R1 - "Decreasing without good reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

4. Analyzing P3 - *The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods* and R1 - *Decreasing without valid reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent*, results in a very significant positive relationship ($\rho=0.828$, $df=472$, $p<0.001$). The scatter diagram (Figure 4) reveals that the spread of points is relatively limited, which indicates a strong correlation ($R^2=0.61$). The slope of the scatterplot of results is relatively a straight line, indicating a linear relationship rather than a curvilinear one. It can be stated that Hypothesis 4 is validated.

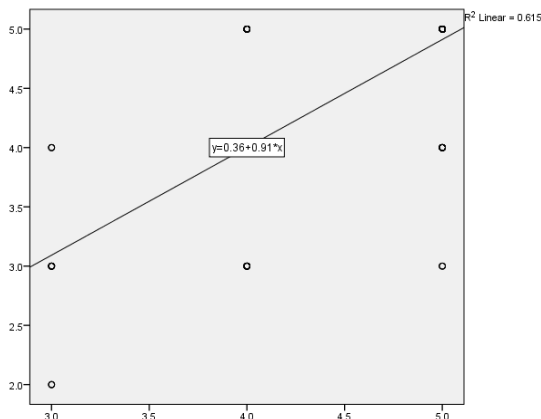


Figure 4. Scatter diagram - correlation between P3 - "The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods." and R1 – "Decreasing without good reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

5. A considerable and statistically relevant correlation is observed between P3 - *The opening and expansion of trade at the global level, together with the unrestricted movement of goods* and R4 - *The refusal to postpone the deadline set for the presentation of bid proposals, following the request submitted by the potential bidders* ($\rho=0.899$, $df=472$, $p<0.001$). According to the scatterplot illustrated in Figure 5, the points are concentrated in a compact manner, suggesting a moderate to strong correlation ($R^2=0.54$). The trajectory of the points on the diagram aligns more with a straight line than a curved one, thus showing that the relationship between the two variables is direct. These findings validate Hypothesis 5.

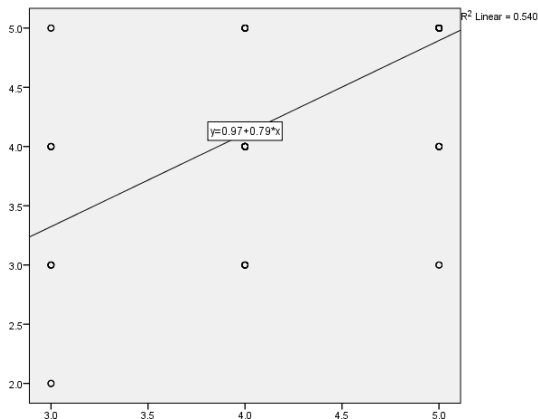


Figure 5. Scatterplot – correlation between P3 - "The opening and expansion of global trade, together with the unrestricted movement of goods." and R4 - "The refusal to postpone the deadline set for the presentation of bid proposals, following the request submitted by the potential bidders."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

6. An extremely solid and statistically significant connection is confirmed ($\rho=0.812$, $df=472$, $p<0.001$) between P4 - *The concept of accepting the obligation* and R1 - *Decreasing without good reasons the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent*, as highlighted in Table 1. The scatterplot in Figure 6 shows a close concentration of points, signaling a moderate to strong correlation ($R^2=0.74$). The direction in which the results are arranged on the graph tends to be more rectilinear than curved, suggesting that the relationship between the two variables is more direct.

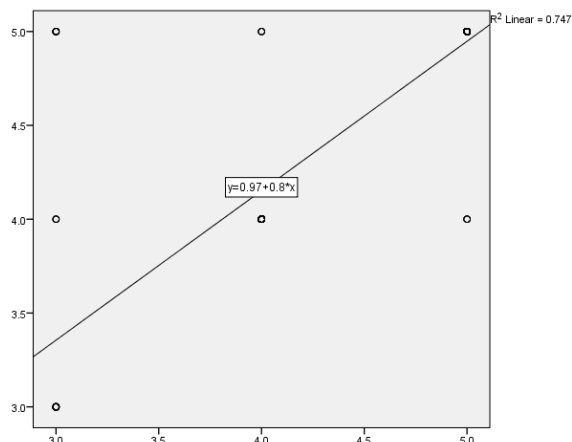


Figure 6. Scatter diagram - the correlation between P4 - "The concept of accepting the obligation" and R1 - "Decreasing without good reason the time interval following the issuance of a notice of intent."

Source: processing data obtained through SPSS program

4. Conclusions

From paper and office supplies to infrastructure and advanced technology services, every purchase is made to support and improve an entity's day-to-day and long-term operations. The role of procurement departments within public institutions is fundamental. Not only do they ensure the necessary resources for the normal functioning of the institutions, but they are also responsible for managing tender procedures, which must be open, transparent and competitive to ensure the judicious use of public funds.

This involves assessing needs, preparing tender documents, selecting suppliers, negotiating contracts and overseeing the delivery and quality of purchased products and services. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, procurement departments within public institutions must be well structured, equipped with qualified personnel and have well-established systems and processes. These departments are not only central to ensuring the resources needed to carry out activities, but also play a key role in preventing corruption and waste of public funds, thus promoting integrity and accountability.

As technologies develop and legal requirements evolve, expectations for procurement functions increase. This is no longer just an administrative function, but has become a strategic area, requiring a deep understanding of the market,

advanced negotiation skills and a thorough knowledge of applicable laws and regulations. In this context, the skills and capabilities of procurement departments are becoming increasingly critical to the success of any public institution.

The statistical analysis of procurement processes in Romania brings to light several critical aspects that influence the performance of the system. A major point of interest is the inefficient use of human resources, particularly those in purchasing roles. Obviously, this inefficiency can be attributed to several factors, such as lack of staff training and specialization, complicated and time-consuming procurement processes, as well as a possible excessive administrative burden that affects the ability of procurers to operate effectively. In this context, the suggestion of regionalization and reduction of the number of contracting authorities seems to be a promising strategic direction. Regionalization could bring significant benefits such as centralizing expertise, standardizing processes and reducing redundancies. This strategy could lead to the strengthening of purchasing capacities and the optimization of human and financial resources.

Another aspect that stood out is the high efficiency of the use of the electronic catalog by the bidding companies. This suggests that the digitization of the procurement process can play a key role in increasing transparency and simplifying access to tenders for companies. The electronic platform appears to be well accepted by bidding firms and effective in improving the visibility of business opportunities in the public sector. This indicates that the public procurement market in Romania is active and that there is a positive dynamic between demand and supply. However, this dynamic could be optimized to maximize efficiency and encourage healthy competition that can lead to quality goods and services at competitive prices for state institutions. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public procurement in Romania, it is crucial to invest in the training and continuous professional development of procurers, to encourage the adoption of new technologies and to analyze the benefits of a better regionalization of contracting authorities.

These procedures must be aligned not only with the legal requirements in force, but also with international best practices, thus guaranteeing a high level of ethics and legality. Moreover, a robust internal control must include regular tracking and reporting mechanisms so that any anomalies are detected and remedied quickly. It also needs to be a continuous feedback process where employees are encouraged to report any problems and where management responds appropriately to them. When the procurement process is executed with professionalism and integrity, the necessary conditions are created for the timely delivery of quality products, services or works that are necessary to fulfill the mission of each contracting authority. This not only contributes to compliance with the approved budget, but also to significant savings, which can be reinvested to achieve sustainable economic performance and better respond to citizens' needs.

First, digitalization of processes can bring increased efficiency, reducing the time and costs associated with public procurement. Online auction and procurement platforms facilitate access to information and increase transparency, while providing equal opportunities for all bidders and facilitating regulatory compliance. Second, continuous collaboration between contracting authorities and economic operators is needed to identify best practices and ensure that procurement procedures are aligned with the needs and capabilities of both parties.

This also includes adapting to rapid changes in the economy, such as price fluctuations, innovations in products and services, or changes in consumer demands. Regulators need to be proactive in reviewing and updating legislation to reflect these changes and to respond to any new challenges that may arise. For example, they must be able to respond to sustainability innovations by integrating green procurement practices and corporate social responsibility. Control institutions also need to update their supervisory methods to remain effective in the face of new ways of operating and ensure that public funds are spent appropriately, while contracting authorities need to improve their internal capacity to manage procurement and cultivate a culture of integrity and transparency.

Therefore, the adaptability and permanent updating of the public procurement system is not only a necessity, but also an opportunity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, to stimulate fair competition between companies and to contribute to the overall economic and social growth of Romania.

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