



**Best-ReMaP**

Healthy Food for a Healthy Future

## **M7.5 Public food procurement evaluation criteria**

Grant Agreement Number 951202

WP 7 NIJZ team

31 / July / 2023



This **report** was funded by the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020)

---

# Contents

Contributors and Acknowledgements ..... 2

Abbreviations ..... 2

Introduction ..... 3

Exploration survey on possible public food procurement criteria..... 4

    1. Importance of individual PFP criteria from the public health point of view of the respondent..... 5

    2. Implementability of the individual PFP at the EU level..... 6

    3. Implementability of the individual PFP at the national level ..... 7

    4. Proposals for additional criteria..... 8

WP7 partners insights regarding PFP criteria ..... 9

WP7 Draft Framework ..... 14

Summary ..... 15

    Summary of the exploratory survey results ..... 15

    Summary of WP7 partners insights regarding PFP criteria..... 15

---

The content of this **report** represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

---

## Contributors and Acknowledgements

The preparation of this report was coordinated by Slovenian National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ). We would like to highlight the invaluable contributions that have gone into preparing the materials discussed in this document, therefore we would like to thank all WP7 partners, who contributed to successfully achieve goals within M7.5 Procurement evaluation criteria.

Additionally, we express our sincere gratitude to the Copenhagen Municipality, especially to Betina Bergmann Madsen for her invaluable contribution in creating the Milestone and in WP7 in general.

## Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
MSs	Member States
NIJZ	National Institute of public health Slovenia
PFP	Public food procurement
SME	Small and medium Enterprises
WP	Work Package
CPH-MUN	Copenhagen Municipality

---

## Introduction

### *Task 7.5 PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENTS EVALUATION CRITERIA*

*Development of the evaluation criteria, based on the practical experiences and good practices from the field - with the inputs from the MS, based on the national specificities:*

- MS to explore the existing criteria at the national level and develop the national criteria, for the executed public tender;*
- comparison of the different criteria in the MS;*
- draft recommendations for the harmonization of the criteria at the EU level, with complete digitalization and transparency, for further steps and potential new funding mechanisms to support the implementation of JA outcomes.*

Criteria refer to a defined set of standards, rules, or guidelines that determine the types of food permitted for serving or selling in particular public establishments and/or for purchase by the government. These criteria encompass various aspects, such as nutrient content, specific food items, preparation techniques, and service modalities. They can be applied to a wide range of food and beverage options, including meals, snacks, and drinks, and may even consider portion sizes and cooking methods. Governments may also establish additional criteria for their public food procurement and service endeavours. For instance, they might focus on promoting food safety through proper handling and preparation practices, as well as emphasize the importance of sourcing from SMEs and farmers or seasonal food items to foster sustainability. Incorporating sustainable practices and supporting local agriculture are also important aspects that can be integrated into public food procurement and service policies. Many countries already have regulations in place that include food safety criteria, which must always be taken into account alongside the objective of promoting healthy diets. Often, governments establish a combination of all these types of criteria to create a comprehensive approach. The specific criteria adopted in each country's context will depend on their practicality and may leverage existing resources (WHO Action Framework for developing and implementing public food procurement and service policies for a healthy diet, 2021). Public health, social aspects, equity and wellbeing and also others might be a part of public food procurement criteria.

---

## Exploration survey on possible public food procurement criteria

WP 7 explored the priority criteria for MSs and the possibility of their implementation with the help of an exploratory survey among BestReMaP MSs. The following criteria was investigated:

- Healthy food
- Climate action
- Small-scale farmers support
- Fair trade
- Social economy and labour rights
- Animal welfare standards
- Organic and other agro-ecological products

Respondents were asked to rate the importance and applicability of above-mentioned criteria, both at the national and European level, using a Likert scale (from 1 to 7), where 1 is absolutely not important, 4 is somewhat important and 7 is absolutely crucial. Each question also had the option of adding an additional qualitative comment/proposal. Lastly, we invited all respondents to propose any additional criteria they believe are important and to comment on the survey or on anything related to PFP criteria.

The results of the exploratory survey are presented below. A total of 21 respondents from 10 Member States (Poland, Malta, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, Italy, Estonia, Denmark) answered the survey. Respondents are representing the public health competent authorities or affiliated authorities in the Member states and thus represent the views of the public health sector.

## 1. Importance of individual PFP criteria from the public health point of view of the respondent

Please, estimate how important the below listed public food procurement criteria are in your opinion, from the public health point of view. Use the Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is absolutely not important, 4 is somewhat important and 7 is absolutely crucial.

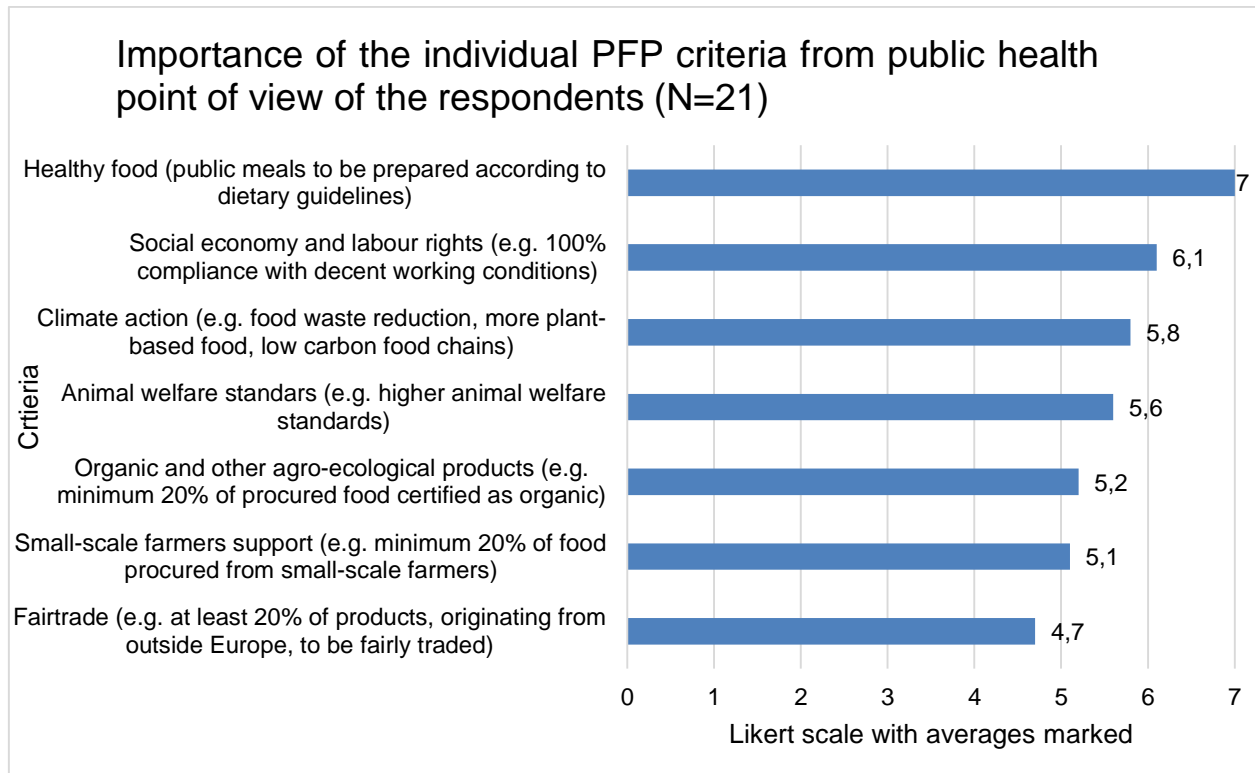


Figure 1: Importance of the individual PFP criteria from public health point of view of the respondents

The survey results indicate that all respondents consider "Healthy food" to be the most important criteria from a public health perspective, as it received the highest score of 7 on the given scale. "Social economy and labour rights" were marked as the second most important criteria, with an average score of 6.1. Following closely behind are the "Climate action" criteria and "Animal welfare standards" criteria, both with average scores of 5.8 and 5.6, respectively. "Fairtrade" received the lowest average rating of 4.7, making it the least important criteria from the public health point of view. Overall, all criteria are considered at least somewhat important by the respondents from public health sector.

Additional answers/proposals provided by responders are: geographical closeness, short supply distance and diversity.

## 2. Implementability of the individual PFP at the EU level

We are interested in how implementable would the individual public food procurement criteria be at the EU level, in your opinion. Use the Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is absolutely not implementable, 4 is somewhat implementable and 7 is absolutely implementable.

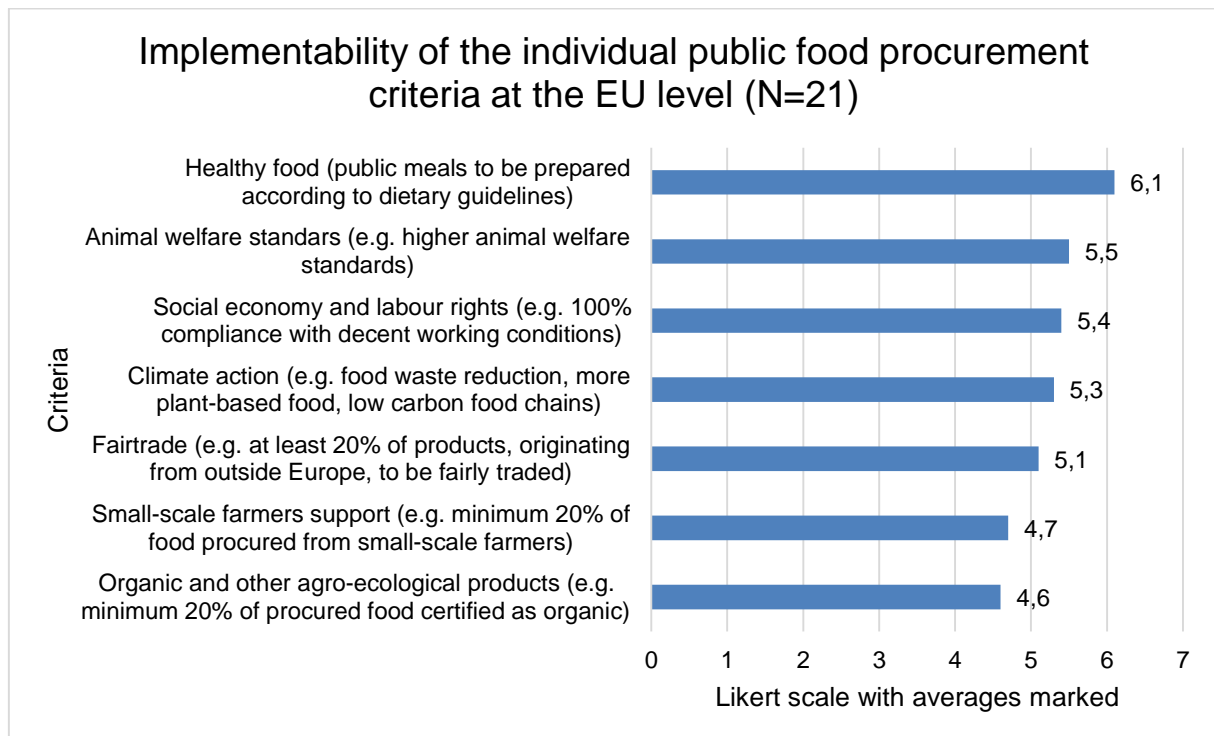


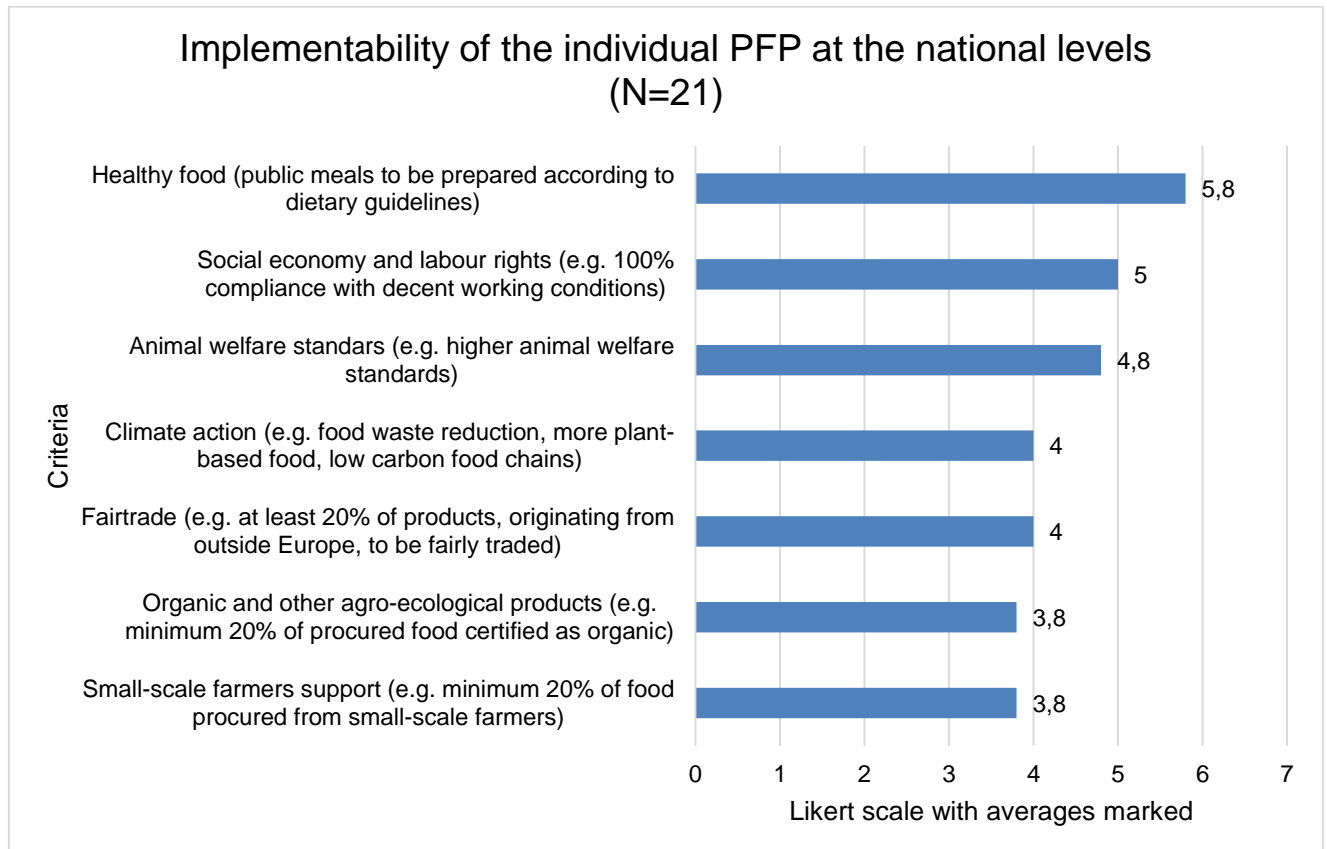
Figure 2: Implementability of the individual PFP criteria at the EU level

As we could observe, respondents are of the opinion that importance of the individual criteria and implement ability of individual criteria are not the same. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that “Healthy food” is the most implementable criteria at the EU level, with the average score of 6.1. Already at the second tared place there is a shift and “Animal welfare standards” were rated as the second most important criteria. “Social economy and labour rights” are also regarding the implement ability rated among the three most implementable criteria at the EU level, with “Climate action” following closely . “Organic and other agro-ecological products” seem to be least implementable at the EU level by the opinion of the public health representatives, with an average score of 4.6. Still, most important is that all respondents consider that the listed criteria are at least partially implementable.

Additional answers/proposals provided by responders are: short supply distance and diversity.

### 3. Implementability of the individual PFP at the national level

We are interested in how implementable would the individual public food procurement criteria be at the EU level, in your opinion. Use the Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is absolutely not implementable, 4 is somewhat implementable and 7 is absolutely implementable.



The first three perceived most implementable criteria at the national level are the same as the perceived most important ones, indicated by the competent authorities, but the average scores are lower in the national as in the EU context. "Healthy food" seems to be the most implementable PFP criteria in the national context, with an average score of 5.8. As the second most implementable criteria in the national context were rated "social economy and labour rights" criteria with an average score of 5, followed by the "Animal welfare standards" (average score – 4.8). "Small-scale farmers support" and "Organic and other agro-ecological products" were rated as the least implementable in the national context, regarding the respondents. Their average score is 3.8. Respondents generally seem to find the criteria least implementable at the national level which gives the indication that more collaboration, multidisciplinary competences, understanding and joint setting of mutual goals would be beneficial.

Additional answers/proposals provided by responders are: short supply distance and diversity



---

## 4. Proposals for additional criteria

*Lastly, we invite you to propose any additional criteria that you believe are important but have not been included in the exploratory survey. Also, feel free to add any additional comments related to the topic of public food procurement criteria.*

Respondents added the following additional comments and criteria proposals:

- price capping
- procurement with different players e.g. caterings, local restaurants,
- no additional criteria, but the criteria above should be binding for procurement of catering services in public institutions (not only procurement of food per se)
- the exemption rule in PFPs (a similar one than in Slovenia) is not well-known in Hungary and in other WP7 countries. it is important to raise awareness of this. As the daily net raw material norm in public catering is low, it is very difficult to get proper quality healthy and sustainable meals for that, although their intention is clear: children have to get good quality food and we have to protect our planet. this minimum norm should also cover the possibility to better integrate green and sustainable aspects in public procurement
- short supply chain and diversity.

---

## WP7 partners insights regarding PFP criteria

1. **Will raising awareness, improving skills and knowledge etc. be sufficient, or, is there a need to make sustainable** (regarding nutrition, biodiversity, climate, something else) **public procurement criteria mandatory?**

**Republic of Srpska:** Obstacles that faced a lack of capacity and need for additional effort give the base for the opinion that it would be more efficient if sustainable public procurement criteria are made mandatory.

**Malta:** The mentioned criteria are all relevant to make it sustainable. Raising awareness is a priority which will increase the knowledge of human resources so that they will start to slowly adapt. This can facilitate to improve the overall efficiency of the resources needed.

**Austria:** It will need both, as knowledge building and awareness raising may have a positive impact on the acceptance of mandatory criteria. But without mandatory criteria on sustainable PFP, the provision of healthy and sustainable meals may remain an offer of those actors, which are already convinced of its positive impact. We therefore strongly recommend mandatory criteria. From our interviews, we have again found that currently the commitment of certain individuals is needed within the catering services, as well as the support of the municipalities. In addition, professional guidance is helpful in driving a paradigm shift within the catering business towards more sustainable food. Regarding awareness raising and knowledge building it may be crucial to inform the different target groups (e. g. decision makers, procurement officers, cooks, kitchen staff) in a way they understand and transfer it into action. Also, the understanding of sustainability must include all aspects – health, ecological, social and economic aspects.

**Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Obstacles that faced, lack of capacity and need for additional effort give the base for the opinion that it would be more efficient if sustainable public procurement criteria are made mandatory. However, as bringing and revisions of Laws require a longlasting and complicated procedure it is useful to incorporate sustainability criteria in relevant documents such as standards and norms. We find the PFP officers network a great instrument that can help the inclusion of sustainability criteria in our law and we will work from entity level to recruit relevant persons from the state level (since the law on public procurement is state law) to become a member of the PFP officers network.

**Greece:** They will not be sufficient. Mandatory criteria, the adaptation of the relevant law and appropriate training for the PFP responsible staff will be needed.

**Finland:** Does this question refer to EU- or national-level mandatory criteria? Following recommendations and guidelines that are not legally binding requires that the public procurer is aware of, interested in, and motivated to follow the recommendations. With the existing complex legislation related to PFP, adopting and implementing additional recommendations

requires extra work, which may not be attractive or feasible for all procurers, particularly if they conduct the competitive tendering independently without the support of a professional joint procurement entity. Mandatory quality criteria could hence be an effective way to maximise the odds that the customers of all public catering services can enjoy equally sustainable food regarding nutritional quality and ecological sustainability. Such mandatory criteria would also prevent procurers that have biased beliefs about nutrition or ecological sustainability (e.g., due to disinformation or conspiracy theories) to arrange competitive tendering of foods based on their false beliefs.

Yet, it is important to remember that procurement contracts do not ensure that public organisations actually order the products that the procurement agreements between the public organisation and the supplier cover. Even if the products included in the procurement agreement meet the recommended nutritional quality, and even if these products have the most advantageous prices, the public organisation (e.g., the catering service of a municipality that produces meals for local kindergartens and schools) can still order alternative products from the supplier's selection that do not meet the criteria; taken that the potentially higher prices of the alternative products are agreeable to the management of the public organisation. In Finland, for example, we have witnessed cases where public organisations that have procurement agreements that cover fat free milk have nevertheless ordered full fat milk from the supplier because the head of the public organisation or the catering service has decided so. Hence, once the winning supplier and the public organisation have signed a procurement agreement that ensures the best terms of the contract for nutritionally beneficial and ecologically sustainable food products, measures are still needed that encourage the public organisations to keep ordering the products that their agreements cover.

**Denmark:** There is a need to make the sustainable targets mandatory, but it should be the member states themselves who plan how to reach the mandatory targets and when to reach them including midterm measurable goals.

**Poland:** In my opinion – there is a need to make sustainable public procurement criteria mandatory

**Hungary:** Both will be needed, as knowledge building and awareness raising may have a positive impact on the acceptance of mandatory criteria. Also, the understanding of sustainability must include all aspects – health, ecological, social and economic aspects. And it will also be crucial to inform the different target groups (e. g. decision makers, procurement officers, food coordinators/public caterers, cooks, kitchen staff) in a way they understand and transfer it into action. But without mandatory criteria on sustainable PFP, only those actors will apply the provisions of healthy and sustainable meals in public procurement who have already recognized of its positive impact and importance. Despite the fact that a recommendation or guidance can also orientate the case-low, we strongly recommend mandatory criteria.

It is very important that to ensure that the mandatory criteria are enforceable and achievable in practice, it is essential to have a guide drawn up in cooperation with the authorities, decision-makers and experts in the field (procurement officers, cooks, kitchen staff).

We believe that the commitment of all those involved in public catering and public food procurement is very important for the success of the implementation.

A healthy diet is a long-term investment in health. Promoting a health-conscious and sustainable lifestyle among the population is a shared national interest, and both guidelines and legislation can contribute to this.

2. **What kind of criteria, if any, are implemented in your PFP procedure? (E.g. award, selection, green public procurement – GPP ...). Please, list as many criteria as you have. Please, also list if you have separate criteria for food products and food suppliers (and what are those criteria).**

**Republic of Srpska:** According to the public procurement procedure, the contracting authority procures on the basis of the lowest price or the most economically advantageous offer. There are criteria related to technical specifications but there are no separate criteria for food products and food suppliers.

**Malta:** The Green Public Procurement is according to the national standards issued by the respective office.

**Austria:** Voluntary standards for cafeterias, meals in kindergarten and schools and food in schools, in general, include criteria

**Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:** According to the public procurement procedure, the contracting authority procures on the basis of the lowest price or the most economically advantageous offer. There are criteria related to technical specifications but there are no separate criteria for food products and food suppliers. Through work with kindergartens and use of Guidelines on healthy nutrition for preschool children is encouraged as well as the necessity for and. All parties need to respect the Law on the Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases, the Law on Food, and the Law on Waste Management.

**Greece:** Codex Alimentarius, Guidelines for healthy nutrition – permitted products in schools, Lower price

**Finland:** In Finland, existing national regulations, government programs and resolutions, and official recommendations set numerous more or less detailed goals and criteria for the public procurement of catering services and foods. These goals and criteria follow EU legislation, strategies, and goals, as well as the UN Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals. The national alignments consider procured catering services, procured food suppliers, and the foods that the catering services procure from the suppliers. Regulations are legally binding and require monitoring. Government programs, resolutions, and recommendations serve as strong recommendations but are not legally binding.

In brief, the national alignments in Finland aim for and promote public procurement that is high in quality, innovative, and ecologically, socially, and financially sustainable. Relatedly, the alignments strive for a just transition to a sustainable food system that considers social, economic, cultural, and ecological aspects of sustainability. Regarding nutrition and health, the

alignments strongly recommend following national nutrition, food, and meal recommendations and the minimum nutritional criteria the recommendations define for meals, meal components, and foods. Regarding ecological sustainability, the alignments focus on and promote increased procurement of local, organic (target for catering services: 25% by 2030), and seasonal food with emphasis on plant-based foods and sustainably sourced fish. Additionally, the alignments promote efficient use of energy, raw materials, and side streams; cleantech solutions; and the reduction of food waste. Further considerations include the promotion of ecologically friendly food production methods and farming practices, animal welfare, food safety, and ecologically sustainable packaging. Regarding social and financial sustainability, the alignments aim to promote open and fair competition, support local employment and businesses, and prevent black economy.

As for the food supplier, procurement criteria are largely statutory and hence unconditional and consider, for example, the suppliers' finances, energy efficiency, ecological sustainability, and the food supply chain. Regarding the procured products, specific procurement criteria are defined by the procurement entity according to the strategic alignments, goals, needs, and hopes of the procurement entity or its customer organisations. These criteria are shaped by the up-to-date regulations, government resolutions, and recommendations. The criteria for the procured products are often highly detailed and concern, for example, product category-specific minimum criteria for nutritional quality as defined in national nutrition, food, and meal recommendations. These criteria consider total energy, the quantity and quality of fat, and the quantity of salt, sugar, and fibre. Further criteria often stem from the real-life operations of the catering service. These criteria consider, for example, shelf life, procurement volumes, delivery functions (e.g., delivery hours and locations), the volumes and measures of product packages, and the level of processing of individual products. The level of processing refers to the shape of the product (e.g., sliced, cubed, grated, or round), the size of the product (e.g., the measures of vegetable cubes in millimetres), and whether the product is fresh, frozen, or canned; cooked or uncooked; and with or without added ingredients.

**Denmark:**

- Food waste
- Reporting on food waste
- Climate friendly food according to public food and meal strategy in the city of Copenhagen
- 95% organic – state-controlled certification (bronze, silver and gold level)
- Palm oil – only certified, preferable phase out palm oil.
- Sustainable soy
- Award criteria for fairly traded goods
- Award criteria for sustainably certified fish
- Award criteria for diversity in fruit and vegetables in season

- Packaging
- Award criteria for Green transport
- Drivers are required to complete a “Drive Green” course
- Award criteria for fresh food (meat etc.) in PET
- Climate weighting reflects recommendations from Danish Technical University (DTU) that have emerged in the collaboration on the implementation of the principles in the Copenhagen strategy for food and meals on nutritious and climate-friendly meals. It is a way to put a focus on the food that we want to put focus on in the future when cooking more climate friendly food. Evaluated through the calculation:

(Climate weight x Tonnage x Price per kilogram).

**Poland:** Award and selection

**Hungary:** The overwhelming majority of the tenders are given out based on the lowest price in PFP. As regards the application of green criteria in PFP, no specific data is available. Pursuant to Government Decree No. 676/2020, in terms of public procurement procedures starting after 1 September 2021, the contracting authority shall not apply the criterion of lowest price as a single award criterion concerning public food services.

## WP7 Draft Framework

Considering the actuality of the topic and the potential of using the criteria in PFP, WP7 has included mandatory minimum criteria for PFP in the Framework proposal.

Based on situation analyses of the EU and national legislation on public food procurement in individual country, practical experiences and shared knowledge on public food procurement, discussions of the EU PFP Network, identified stakeholders and established inter-sectoral working groups, the minimum criteria for public food procurement should be set. The criteria should cover at least the following aspects: health, sustainability, and equity.

Reaching significant progress in food production necessitates a driving force, as voluntary measures may prove inadequate. The potential for hidden transformation (reformulation) arises when low-quality products are no longer procured or allowed, prompting food producers to reformulate their products to meet elevated standards.



---

## Summary

### Summary of the exploratory survey results

The survey, implemented among public health competent authorities in EU member states, is highlighting the importance of various PFP criteria from a public health perspective. "Healthy food" is unanimously perceived as the most crucial criteria, receiving the highest rating of 7 from all respondents. "Social economy and labour rights" come in second place, with an average score of 6.1. "Climate action" and "Animal welfare standards" closely follow. "Fairtrade" ranks the lowest in importance, with an average rating of 4.7. Overall, the respondents consider all criteria to be at least somewhat important in the context of public health.

Overall, the respondents perceived "Healthy food" as the most implementable criteria at the EU level (with an average rating of 6.1), while "Organic and other agro-ecological products" received the lowest average rating (4.6), suggesting a somewhat lower perceived feasibility for its implementation at the EU level. The other criteria fell within the mid-range of implementability, indicating varying degrees of feasibility.

Regarding implementability at the national context, the ratings suggest that "Healthy food" and "Animal welfare standards" are considered the most implementable criteria, while "Small-scale farmers support" and "Organic and other agro-ecological products" fall within the moderately implementable range. The criteria related to "Social economy and labor rights" is also perceived as moderately implementable, but slightly more so than "Fairtrade" and "Climate action."

### Summary of WP7 partners insights regarding PFP criteria

In summary, WP7 partners indicate a general consensus on the need to make sustainable public food procurement criteria mandatory. The majority of respondents agree that raising awareness and improving knowledge alone may not be sufficient to drive significant change. They highlight the importance of incorporating sustainability criteria into relevant laws, standards, and norms. Mandatory criteria are seen as crucial to ensure that public organizations consistently prioritize sustainable practices in food procurement. Additionally, training and guidance for procurement officers and other relevant staff are considered essential for successful implementation. The importance of promoting a health-conscious and sustainable lifestyle is emphasized, and both guidelines and legislations are seen as valuable tools to achieve this goal. Overall, a combination of awareness-raising efforts and mandatory criteria is deemed necessary for effective and lasting impact in the realm of public food procurement.

In summary, the implemented criteria in the public food procurement procedures vary among the countries:

- Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The criteria are primarily based on the lowest price or the most economically advantageous offer, with technical specifications considered.



- 
- Malta: The Green Public Procurement follows national standards issued by the respective office.
  - Austria: Voluntary standards exist for cafeterias, meals in kindergarten and schools, and food in schools, incorporating various criteria.
  - Greece: The criteria include Codex alimentarius, Guidelines for healthy nutrition, and lower price.
  - Finland: National regulations, government programs, and recommendations set detailed goals and criteria for public food procurement, focusing on sustainability and health aspects, with both legally binding and non-binding measures.
  - Denmark: Criteria encompass food waste reduction, sustainable and certified food products, diversity in fruits and vegetables, packaging considerations, and green transport.
  - Poland: Criteria include award and selection factors.
  - Hungary: Lowest price is no longer the single award criterion concerning public food services after September 2021.

In spite of the fact that each country's approach to public food procurement criteria reflects its priorities and strategies related to sustainability, health, and environmental considerations, strong common elements in public food procurement criteria are identified, supporting the WP7 framework proposal to set the EU minimum standard criteria mandatory.