Quality over price

The future of public procurement of engineering services in the EU

Nina Dražin Lovrec

President of the European Council of Engineers Chambers

6–7 November 2026, Dubrovnik

ecec European Council of Engineers Chambers

Public procurement in the EU

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ESTIMATES, SEPTEMBER 2026

€2.5 trillion

annual value of public procurement in the EU

around 15%

of European Union GDP

The EU construction ecosystem

EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION OBSERVATORY DATA

6.5 million

enterprises

27 million

people employed in 2024

The EU’s second-largest industrial ecosystem by employment.

The Luxembourg Declaration

15 May 2025
Luxembourg

A joint initiative by
ACE, EFCA, ECEC and OAI

Nearly 1.5 million
architects and consulting engineers



The Declaration’s four demands

01 Quality in selection	Ban the lowest price as the sole criterion for intellectual services.
02 A dedicated framework	Procurement rules tailored to intellectual services.
03 Innovation and protection of professional work	Quality-based selection and remuneration for work during procurement.
04 Market access	Easier participation for SMEs and new firms.

Quality-based selection

Ban the lowest price as the sole criterion for intellectual services.

The aim of the revision	High-quality solutions offering the best value for public money.
The signatories' demand	Tenderer selection must recognise the quality of intellectual services.

A dedicated framework for intellectual services

A dedicated chapter in the Public Procurement Directive.

Quality and procurement thresholds

Quality-based selection criteria and an appropriate procurement threshold.

Access and professional cooperation

Rules that support SMEs and facilitate cooperation between professionals.

Innovation and protection of professional work

Mandatory quality-based selection for intellectual services.

Quality of the built environment	Promote design competitions when procuring architectural services.
Value and remuneration for work	Consider wider environmental and social costs and prohibit demands for unpaid planning work.

Access for small firms and new entrants

Simpler conditions for participation in public procurement.

Less administrative complexity	Consider the benefits of dividing contracts into lots for SMEs.
More flexible criteria	For example, a longer period for accepting references or lower minimum turnover requirements.

Presenting the Declaration to the Commission

ADVOCATING THE DECLARATION'S DEMANDS

10 September, Brussels

Representatives of ECEC, ACE, OAI and EFCA presented and advocated the Declaration's demands.

Meeting with Valentina Schaumburger from Stéphane Séjourné's Cabinet and Lucia Martinez Lorenzo from DG GROW's Public Procurement Unit.



European Parliament resolution

9 SEPTEMBER 2025

Priorities for revising public procurement rules

Value-based selection	Greater emphasis on quality and best value for money, particularly for intellectual services.
Small and micro-enterprises	Better access to public procurement procedures.
The specific nature of services	Better recognition of the diversity of intellectual services, including engineering.

ECEC welcomes the resolution and its key principles.

The European Commission’s new proposal

9 September 2026

A single, directly applicable regulation

It would replace Directives 2014/23/EU, 2014/24/EU and 2014/25/EU.

Simpler procedures and strategic procurement

Three procedures, more negotiation, and environmental, social and security objectives.

A legislative proposal. Parliament and the Council still need to negotiate the final text.

Commission estimates of administrative savings

€650 million

total annual administrative savings

€80 million

contracting authorities

€570 million

economic operators

The proposal‘s new quality approach suggests…

30%

minimum weighting of quality criteria in the total score, as a general rule for contact awards

50%

minimum weighting of quality criteria for the award of labour-intensive contracts

Best price-quality ratio as the default approach, subject to ‘comply or explain’.

ECEC Demands

Keep a Directive and make it stronger rather than introducing a Regulation – preserve common EU standards

Preserve common EU standards while allowing necessary national flexibility and avoid the danger that in practice procedures tend to adapt to the lowest minimum.

ECEC Demands

Recognise intellectual services as a separate category of labour-intensive services

Failing to recognize the specific nature of intellectual services hinders the use of their full potential in innovation and in approaching our major societal challenges.

ECEC Demands

Provide an adequate framework for the procurement of intellectual services

Enable proper assessment of quality and professional competence, negotiation and protection/remuneration of intellectual work during tendering.

ECEC Demands

Give quality a much stronger role in the procurement of engineering and other intellectual services

30%

minimum weighting of quality criteria in the total score, as a general rule

70%

minimum weighting of quality criteria for **intellectual services**

ECEC Demands

Improve SME access to public procurement

Make division into lots standard practice, ensure proportionate requirements and reduce administrative/documentation burdens.

ECEC Demands

Strengthen procurement expertise and oversight

Professionalise contracting authorities and and implent the right of professional organisations/chambers to initiate review procedures against problematic tender documents.

Next steps in ECEC

The draft detailed position paper will be sent out to the ECEC member organisations after GAM

Feedback from member organisation until the end of November 2026

Finalization of the paper in the beginning of December 2026

Member organisations use paper as a basis for advocating on national (Council) level and towards their national MEPs

Striving for a common statement with the Luxembourg Declaration partners

Member organisations use paper as a basis for advocating on national (Council) level and towards their national MEPs

Next steps in the reform

European Parliament and Council	Negotiations on the proposal before adoption and entry into force.
ECEC and professional organisations	Advocating a dedicated framework and higher requirements for intellectual services. Council opinion is pre-discussed in Council
Building professional capacity	ECEC supports investment in contracting authorities' skills, guidance and good practice.

Quality over price

Quality procurement of engineering services protects the public interest and the long-term value of a project.

The specific nature of intellectual work must be reflected in the criteria, procedures and conditions of participation.

Thank you for your attention!