Draft guidelines and measures to improve ICT procurement

Survey results

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APPENDIX 1: STANDARDS SURVEY RESULTS

A1.1 Analysis of Survey Results

1.1 The results from the survey were extracted from the Interactive Policy Making tool into excel. Where options existed for respondents to reply 'other' (type of organisation and sector) responses were coded and additional categories added to the results.

1.2 Summary charts and tables were created for each question, as presented below. Responses per question include 'N/A' when the respondent did not answer the question. Unless otherwise stated, responses to questions are expressed as a proportion of only those answering the question, rather than the total sample size of 176.

1.3 Evaluation has been done on a country level where possible, with analysis restricted to the eight countries from which there were received at least eight survey responses.[1]

A1.2 Part 1 - Overview of Respondents

A1.1 A survey of public authorities, ICT suppliers and policy groups was undertaken in order to gather views on the Guidelines and information on the impacts of accompanying practical implementation measures.

A1.2 The survey was open from 16 December 2011 until 14 February 2012.

A1.3 The sample of respondents indicates that a good range of both public authorities and ICT suppliers were captured by the survey, with representation from most Member States, public authorities spread across different sectors and organisations of different sizes.

A1.4 In total, 176 responses were received. Of these responses, 99 came from public authorities, 40 from ICT suppliers, 10 from a policy group and 27 from other types of organisation.[2]

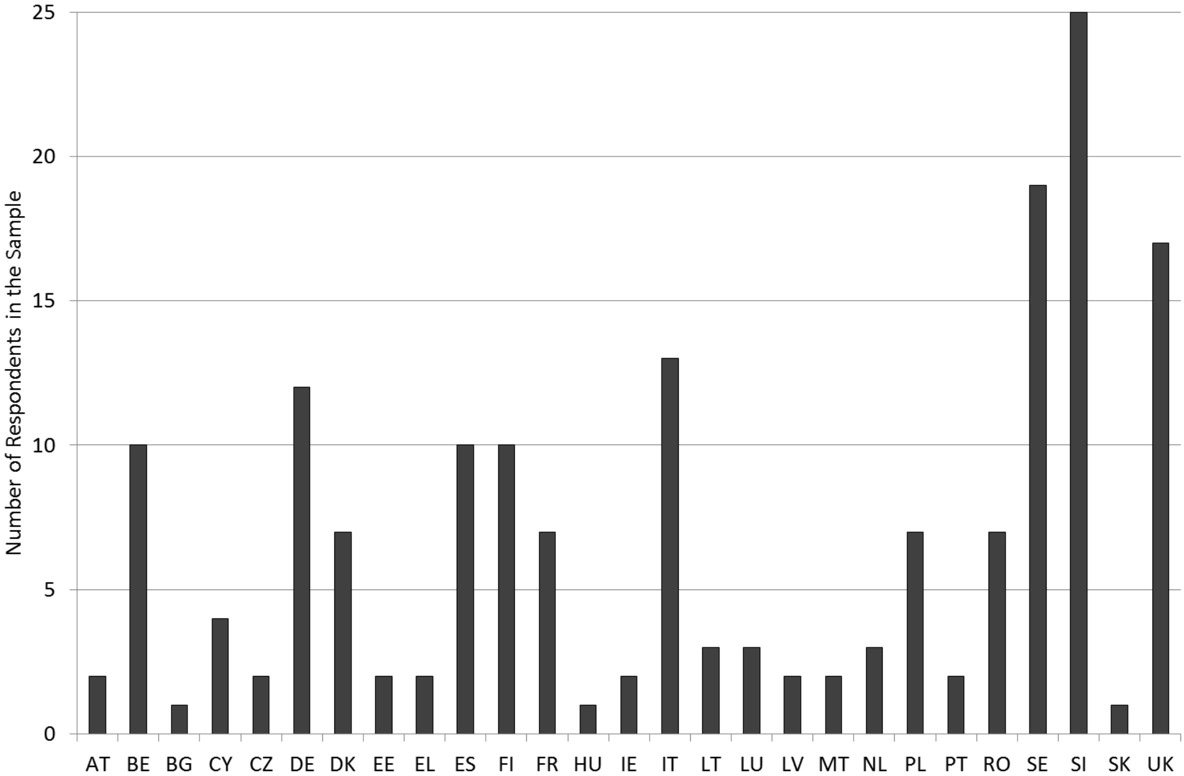
A1.5 The best represented Member State is Slovenia, with 25 respondents (14 per cent of all respondents), followed by Sweden with 19 respondents, UK (17) and Italy (13). There were 12 responses from Germany, 10 from Spain and seven from France, so all five of the largest economies were reasonably well represented.

[1] Belgium, Germany, Spain, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Slovenia and the UK

[2] Other types of organisation responding included four consulting companies, four standards organisations, six publically funded organisations and two universities

Question B.6: Member State in which your Organisation is located

Figure A2. 1: Number of Organisations by Member State



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question B.6

A1.6 Public authorities that responded came from a wide range of sectors, as shown in the table below.

Question B.4: If public authority, which sector does your organisation operate in?

Table A2. 1: Public Procurers' Sectors[3]

Sector of Organisation	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Economic affairs	22	22%
Education	15	15%
Environment/Agriculture	6	6%
Health	10	10%
Housing and community amenities	4	4%
Local authority	4	4%
Municipality	3	3%
National Government	2	2%
Public order and safety	9	9%
Recreation, culture and religion	1	1%
Social Protection	3	3%
ICT/Media	4	4%
Transport	1	1%
Other	11	11%
N/A	4	4%
Total	**99**	**100%**

Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question B.4

A1.7 Table A2.2 below shows the size of the responding organisations ranges from less than ten employees to over 1000. Large organisations[4] (over 1000) make up the majority of the sample (36 per cent). Small organisations (less than 50) made up 28 per cent of the sample.

3 Sectors defined using the United Nations 'Classification of the Functions of Government', and include additional sectors where there were commonly identified by respondents, such as transport, national government; municipality and local government.

4 Large is classified as over 1000 employees, medium as between 50 and 1000, and small as less than 50

Question B.8: Size of organisation (number of employees)

Table A2. 2: Proportion of Organisations by Size (employees)

Number of employees	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than 10	17	10%
11 – 50	33	19%
51 – 250	33	19%
251 – 500	10	6%
501 – 1000	10	6%
More than 1000	63	36%
N/A	10	6%
Total	**176**	**100%**

Source: Europe Economics *Standards* Survey Question B.8

A1.8 The size distribution of organisations, according to annual turnover or budget, is similarly weighted towards the large values, as shown in Table A2. 3 below.[5]

Question B.9: Annual turnover or budget for the last set of audited accounts (expressed in euro).

Table A2. 3: Size Distribution of Organisations (turnover or budget)

Turnover or budget	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than €500, 000	20	11%
€500,000 – €1 million	11	6%
€1 million – €5 million	19	11%
€5 million – €10 million	14	8%
€10 million - €50 million	35	20%
More than €50 million	40	23%
N/A	37	21%
Total	**176**	**100%**

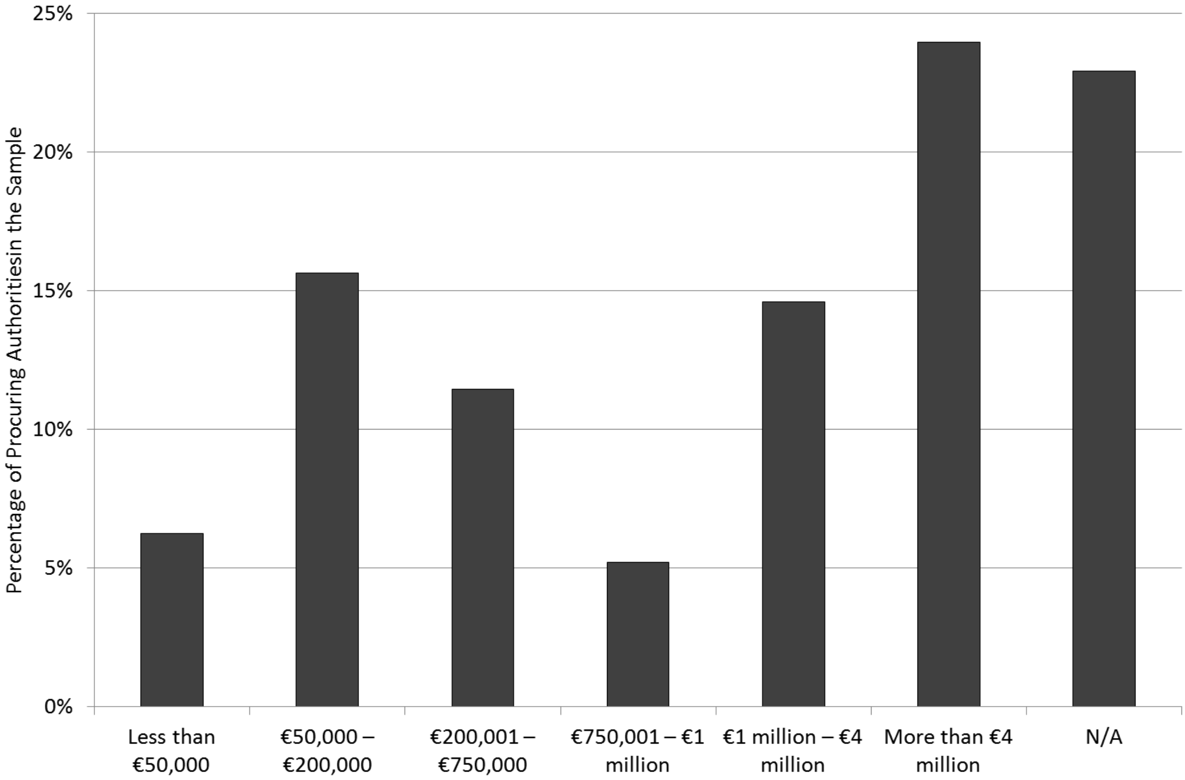
Source: Europe Economics *Standards* Survey Question B.9

A1.9 The procuring authorities that responded to the survey typically had undertaken a large total value of ICT procurement over the last year, with 39 per cent having procured over €1 million.

5 Annual turnover or budget for latest year for which records are available

Question B.10: If you are a public authority, what was the total value of ICT procurement for your organisation in the last year for which you have records? (Expressed as euro)

Figure A2. 2: Proportion of Procuring Authorities by Size (ICT expenditure)



1.4

Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question B.10

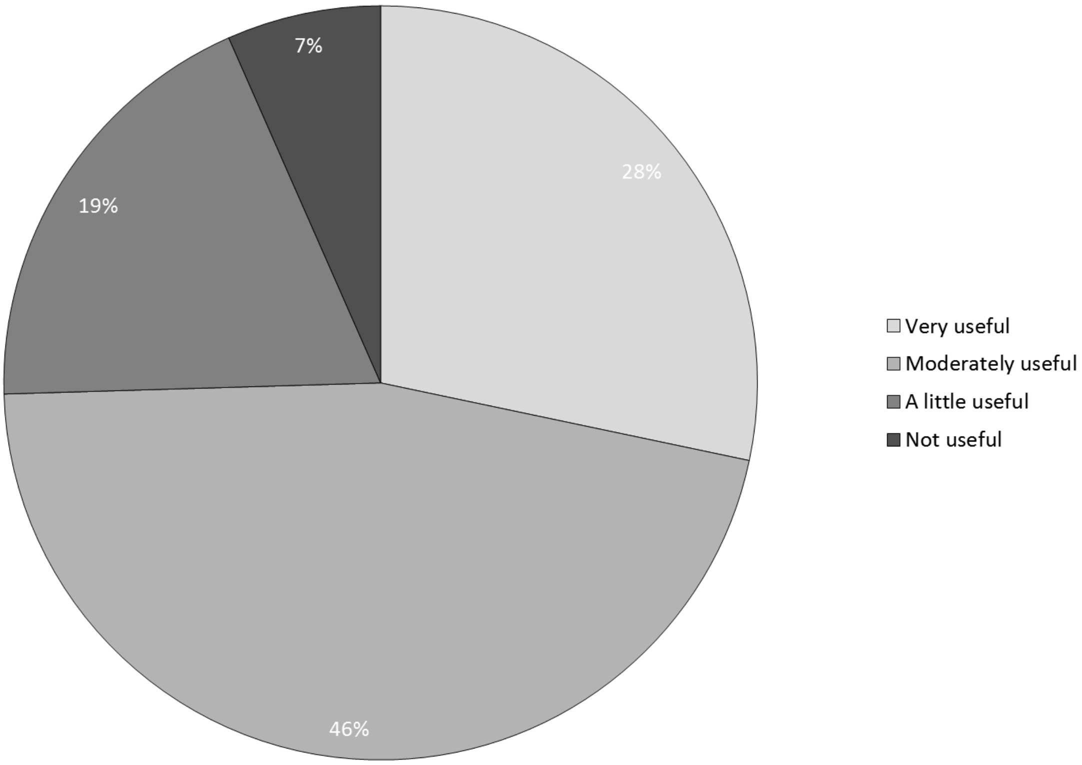
A1.3 Part 2 - Comments on Guidelines

A1.10 We asked respondents for their views on our draft Guidelines for ICT public procurement.

A1.11 For those respondents that gave a view on whether our Guidelines address all problems in ICT public procurement, just over half of them (52 per cent) felt that all problems were addressed, whilst just under half (48 per cent) felt that they were not.

Question C.3: If you are a public chief information architect or public procurer, is this guidance useful to procurers?

Figure A2. 3: Opinion of public chief information architects and public procurers on the usefulness of Europe Economics' ICT public procurement guidance to procurers



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question C.3

Question C.5: Could any additional best practice be included?

A1.12 Of those that provided a view, over half (60 per cent) thought that additional best practice examples could be included in the guidance document

A1.4 Part 3 - Improving the Procurement Process

A1.4.1 ICT procurement strategy

A1.13 Survey respondents were asked if they were aware of any ICT procurement strategies in place at an organisational, sectoral, regional or national level. Of those that answered these questions, the highest percentage were aware of a strategy at a national level (42 per cent), followed closely by strategies at organisational level (34 per cent) and sectoral level (31 per cent). Fewest respondents were aware of an ICT procurement strategy at a regional level, with only 19 per cent recording this.

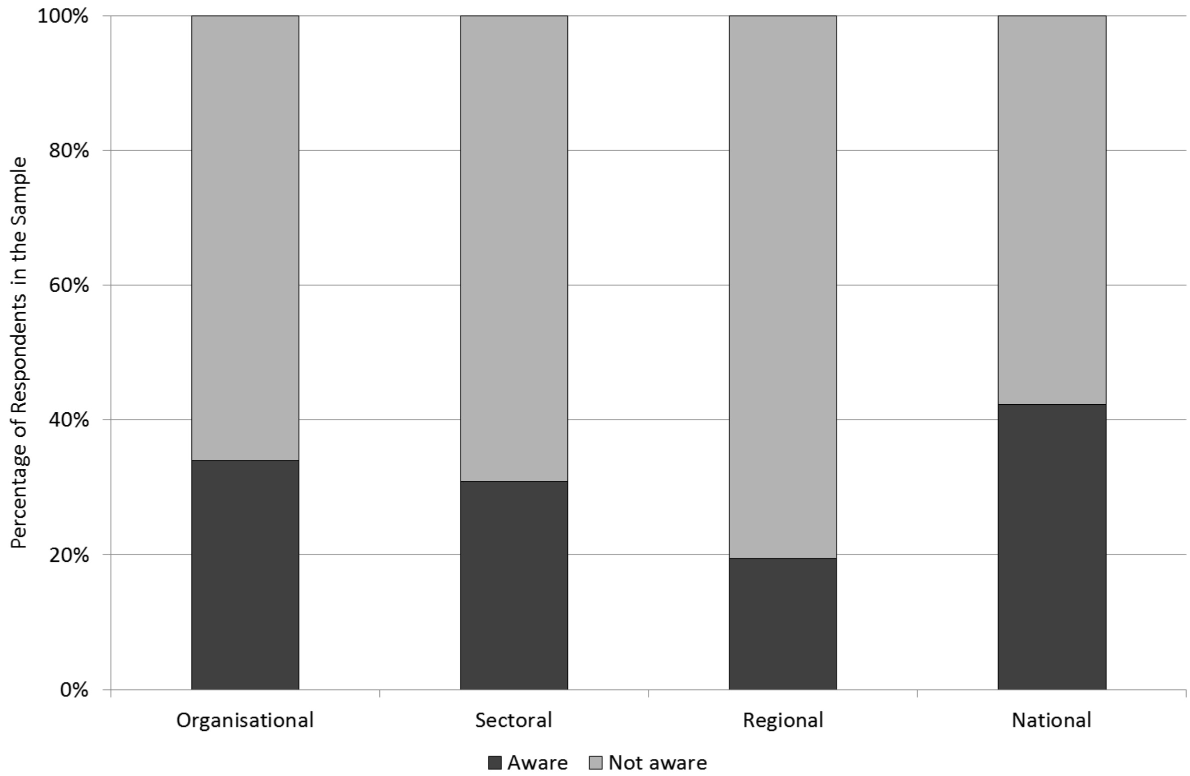
Question D.A.1: Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at an organisational level (e.g. individual public bodies)

Question D.A.5: Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a sectoral level (e.g. strategies applicable to certain areas such as transport or health)

Question D.A.9: Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a regional level (e.g. across regions or groups of municipalities)

Question D.A.13: Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a national level

Figure A2. 4: Awareness of ICT strategies at different levels



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.A.1, D.A.5, D.A.9 and D.A.13

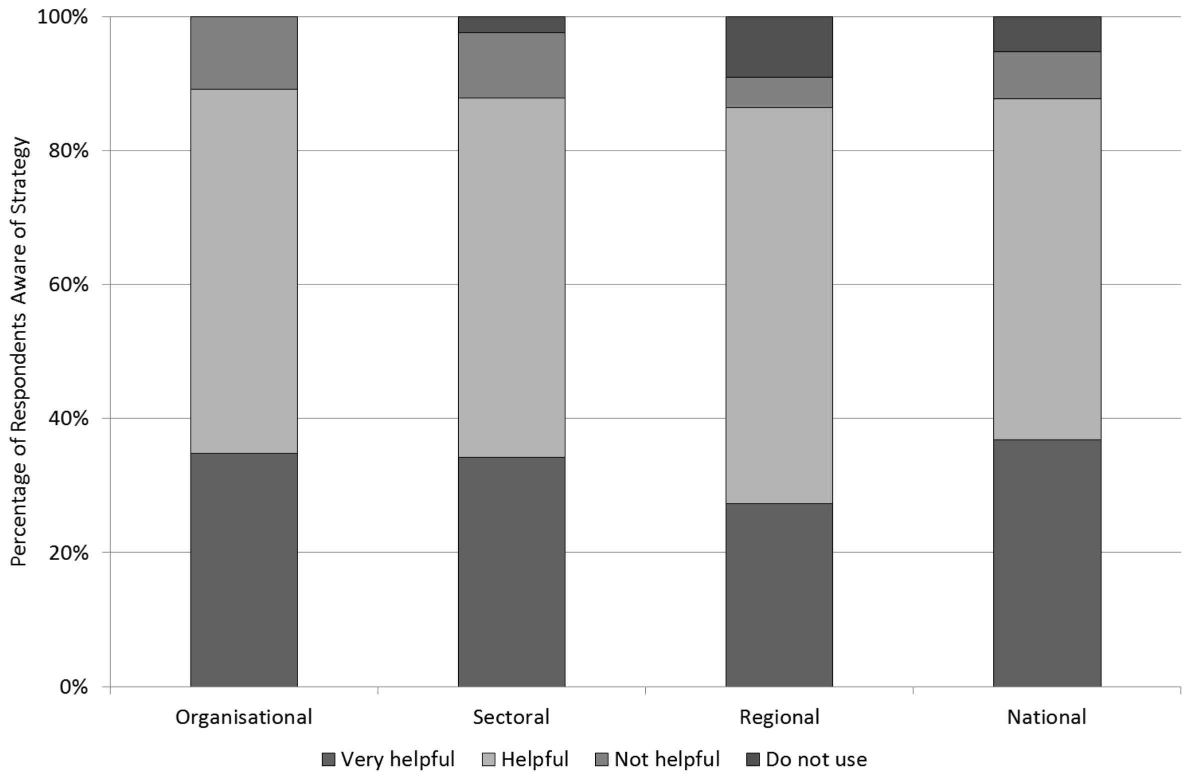
A1.14 These figures show a low general level of awareness of ICT procurement strategies across Europe. Evaluating at a country level, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Finland all had relatively high levels of awareness of ICT procurement strategies. Of those that provided an answer to this question, around three quarters of respondents from each of these countries were aware of ICT procurement strategies at a national level and at least half of respondents from each of these countries were aware of ICT procurement strategies at an organisational level. In both Finland and Germany, awareness of strategies at an organisational level reached 70 per cent. In addition, over half of respondents from Belgium, Spain and Finland were aware of strategies at a sectoral level.

A1.15 In comparison, awareness in Italy, Sweden, Slovenia and the UK was very low. At all levels, fewer than half of respondents knew of strategies in place. At a national level, the UK had the highest awareness of ICT procurement strategies in place at 40 per cent, followed by Italy at 30 per cent and Sweden and Slovenia the lowest at 25 per cent.

A1.16 For those that were aware of ICT procurement strategies at different levels, the vast majority felt that these were very helpful or helpful in each case. Strategies at regional level were slightly less utilised than those at other levels, with 9 per cent of respondents answering that they did not use these and an additional five per cent finding the strategies at this level unhelpful. Strategies at a national level were seen to be the most helpful, with 37 per cent of respondents finding them very helpful and an additional 51 per cent finding them helpful. Only seven per cent of respondents felt that national strategies were not helpful and only five per cent did not make use of national ICT procurement strategies.

Question D.A.3, D.A.7, D.A.11 and D.A.15: If yes, how helpful are they?

Figure A2. 5: Current value of ICT procurement strategies at different levels

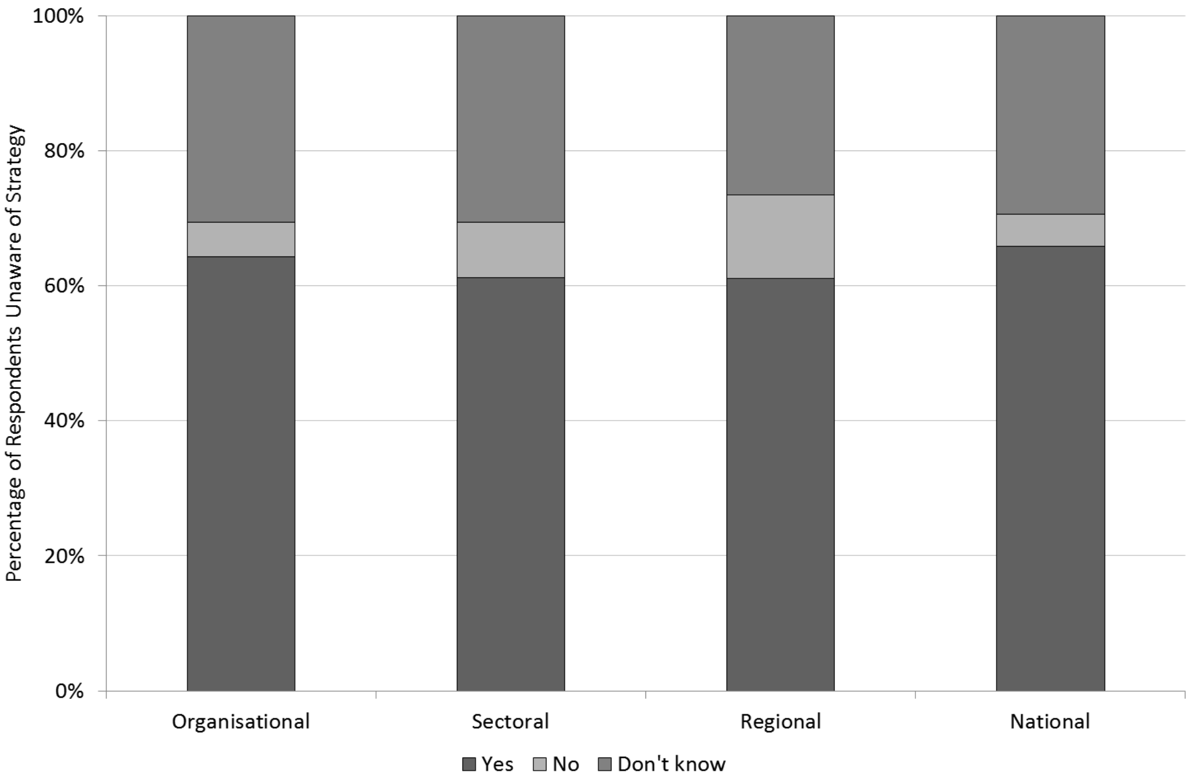


Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.A.3, D.A.7, D.A.11 and D.A.15

A1.17 Of those respondents unaware of an ICT procurement strategy at the different levels, most felt that such strategies would prove to be helpful sources of guidance. At each of the various levels similar proportions felt that ICT procurement strategies would be beneficial, with the ratio varying between 61 per cent for sectoral strategies and 66 per cent for national strategies.

Question D.A.4, D.A.8, D.A.12 and D.A.16: If no, would such a strategy be a helpful source of guidance to the public procurement of ICT?

Figure A2. 6: Envisaged benefits of ICT procurement strategies at different levels



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.A.4, D.A.8, D.A.12, D.A.16

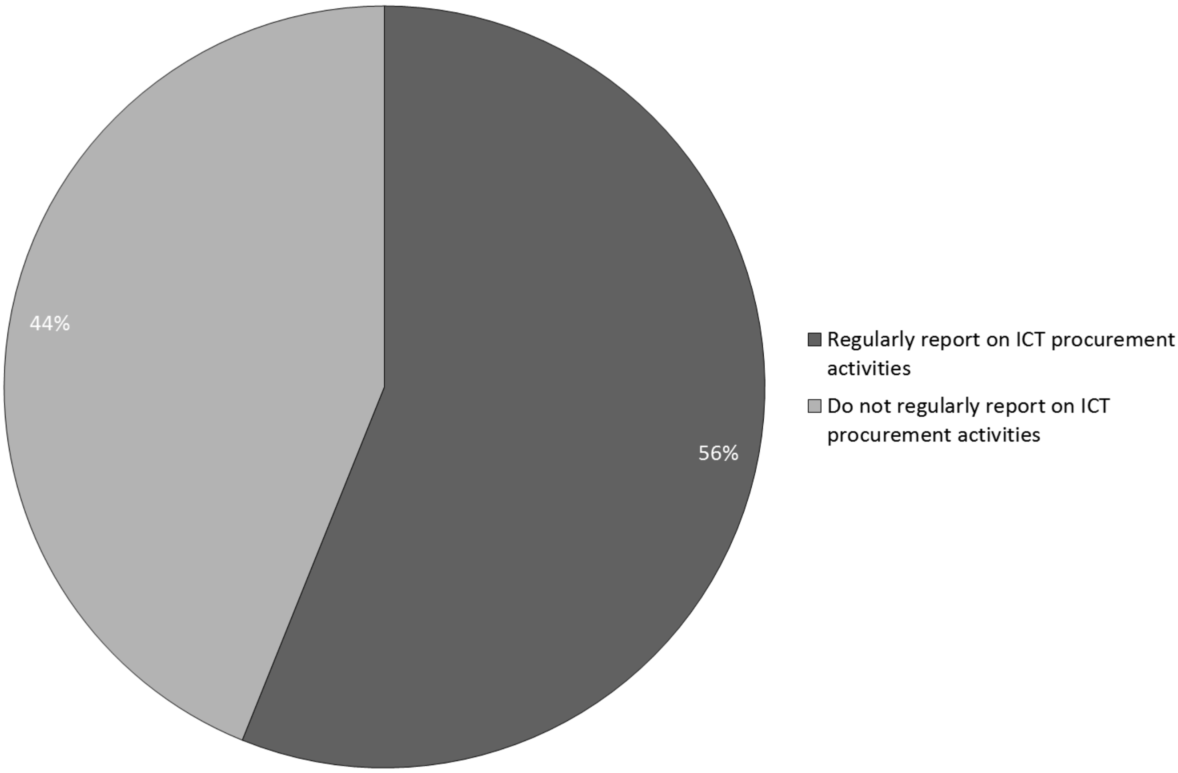
A1.18 However, in each case, large numbers of respondents felt unable to provide an opinion of the value of such strategies, showing that they could not immediately see any clear benefits of these strategies in guiding public procurement of ICT. The benefits of organisational and sectorial strategies were least clear, with 31 per cent of respondents not knowing if these would prove to be a helpful source of guidance. Those believing that ICT procurement strategies at the different levels would be no help in providing guidance to the public procurement of ICT were the minority in each case. The value of regional strategies attracted the highest number of negative reactions, with 12 per cent of respondents expecting that a strategy at this level would not be helpful, compared to eight per cent at sectoral level and five per cent at both organisational and national level.

A1.4.2 Reporting and reviewing

A1.19 Just over half (56 per cent) of respondents recorded that they regularly report on their ICT procurement activities.

Question D.B.1: Do you report regularly on your ICT procurement activities?

Figure A2. 7: Regularity of reporting on ICT procurement activities

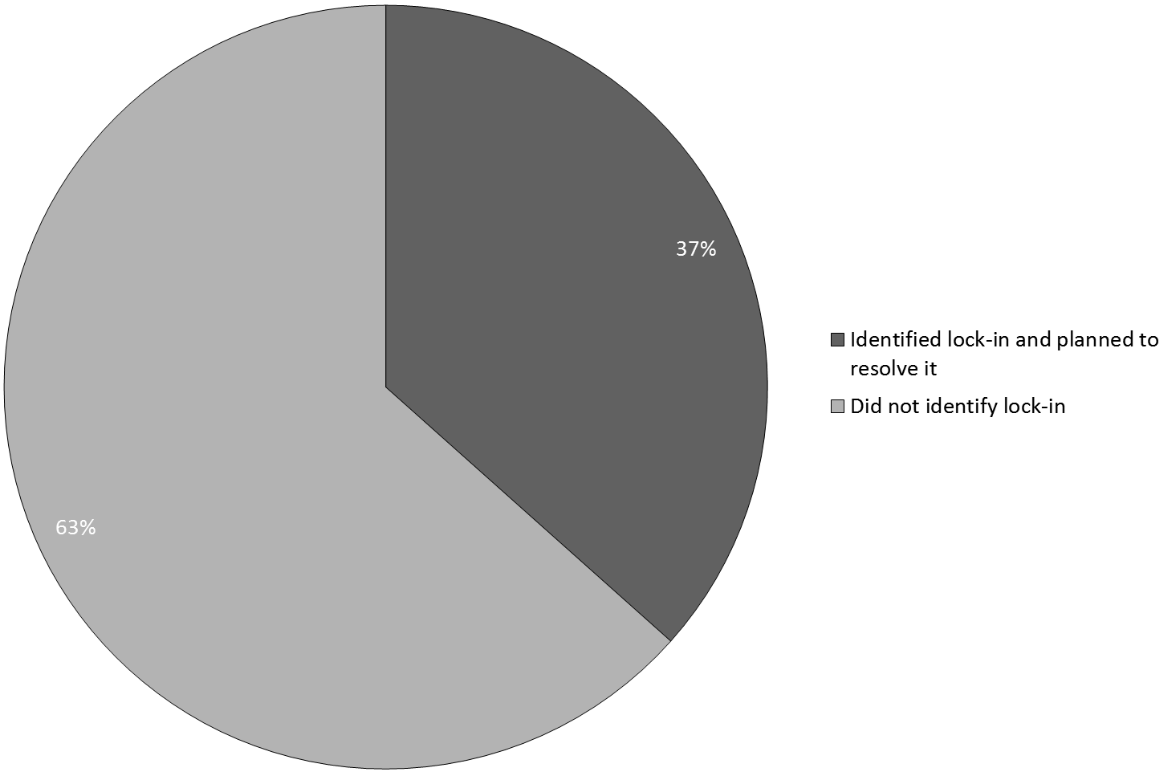


Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.B.1

A1.20 Of those that did regularly report on their ICT procurement activities, 37 per cent had previously identified and planned to resolve a lock-in situation.

Question D.B.2: If yes, have you ever identified a lock-in situation and planned to resolve it?

Figure A2. 8: Instances of lock-in situations being identified and resolved



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.B.2

A1.21 Elaborations of instances of lock-in situations:

(a) A public authority in Cyprus had experienced lock-in after the purchase of Oracle products and GPS equipment and software.

(b) A public authority in Spain had experienced lock-in with document formats and web portal products. They felt that the decision was forced by politics, against the standardised ENS (Spanish National Security) and ENI (Spanish National Interoperability) frameworks published by Spain in 2010 and against technical recommendations.

(c) A public authority in the UK noted that if they found themselves locked into a supplier and the situation was considered either costly or counter-productive then opportunity was taken to tender the solution or identify options to address the lock-in. Pressure was also put on suppliers to facilitate integration with other applications where required.

(d) A public authority in Slovenia had been dependent on one supplier because of specific IT technology used for taxation. No other provider in the state was equipped with sufficient knowledge of both the specific technological issues and the business processes that the authority dealt with.

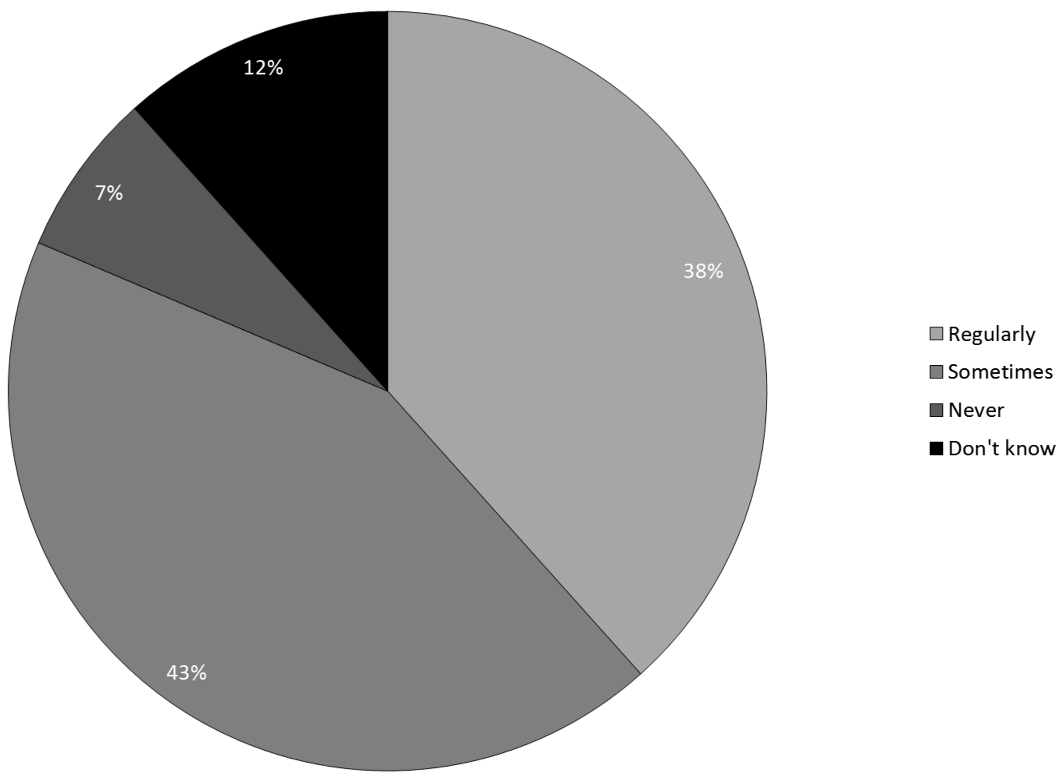
(e) A public authority in Finland noted that legacy systems are based on closed architecture, such that the conversion process to new open architecture takes 10 to 15 years.

(f) A public authority in Germany had previously experienced a lock-in situation from the use of Oracle/SUN. They subsequently replaced this with a combination of LINUX and commodity hardware.

A1.22 A reasonable proportion (38 per cent) of organisations responded that they regularly undertake internal reviews of their ICT procurement practices. A slightly larger number (43 per cent) noted that they sometimes undertake reviews, leaving only seven per cent of organisations who never undertake reviews and 12 per cent of respondents who did not know if internal reviews were undertaken.

Question D.B.4: Are your ICT procurement practices reviewed internally in your organisation?

Figure A2. 9: Frequency of internal reviews of ICT procurement practices

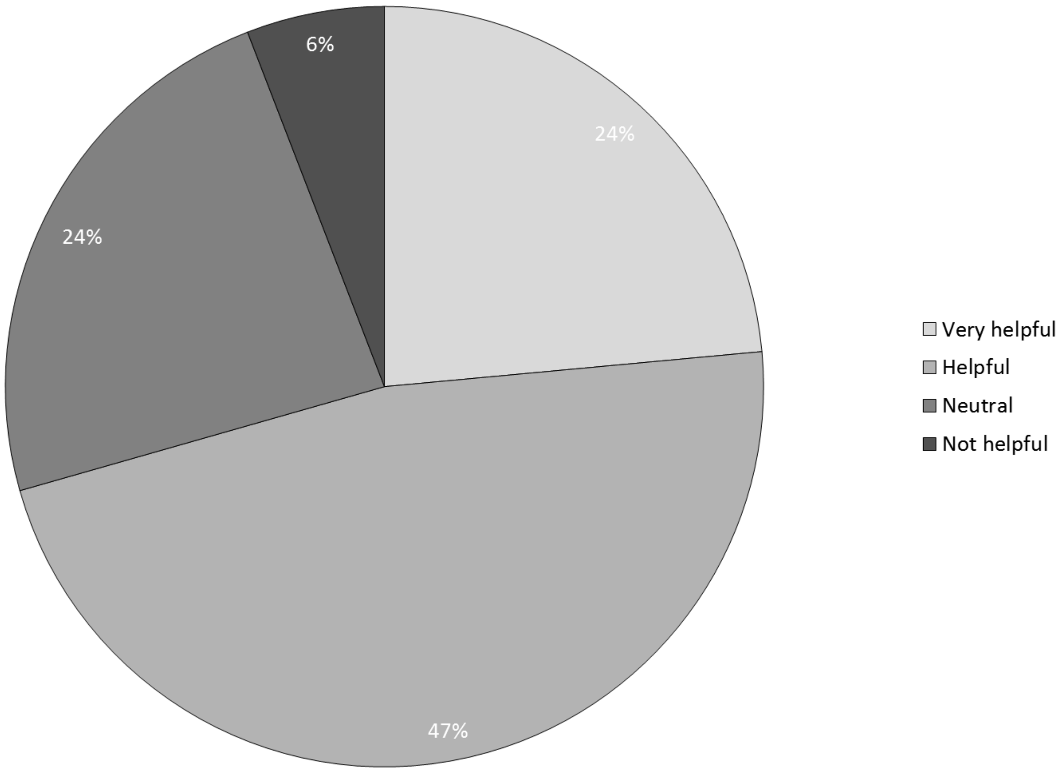


Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.B.4

A1.23 Of those respondents whose organisations currently undertook internal reviews of ICT procurement practices, most did not have strong views on the value of such reviews in encouraging good practice in ICT procurement, with the majority (71 per cent) feeling that reviews were either helpful (47 per cent) or had neutral feelings towards them (24 per cent). Just under a quarter (24 per cent) of respondents felt they were very helpful and only six per cent of respondents felt that they were not helpful at all.

Question D.B.5: How helpful are such internal reviews in encouraging good practice in ICT procurement?

Figure A2. 10: Value of internal reviews of ICT procurement practices

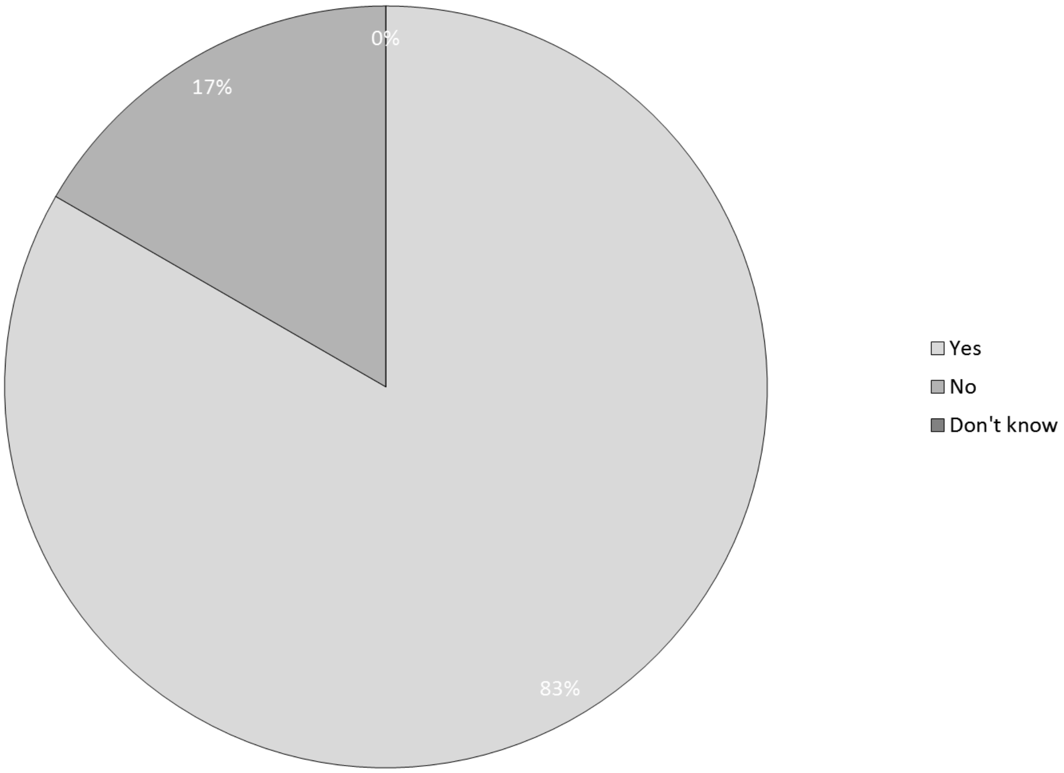


Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.B.5

A1.24 Out of the six respondents from organisations currently never undertaking reviews, five felt that the inclusion of such reviews within annual reporting requirements would be a useful discipline and only one felt that it would not.

Question D.B.6: Would the inclusion of such reviews within annual reporting requirements be a useful discipline?

Figure A2. 11: Views on whether internal reviews of ICT procurement practices would be useful



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.B.6

A1.4.3 Provision of procurement advice

A1.25 Respondents were asked if they were aware of any central sources of advice for procurers (e.g. helpdesks; websites). The type of information the largest proportion of respondents were aware of a source for within their Member State was advice on following procurement law (62 per cent). The next highest level of awareness for an information source was for general principles of procurement best practice (52 per cent), followed by ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders (47 per cent) and training on good procurement (38 per cent). The two types of information for which respondents were least aware of a source were advice on analysing purchasing needs (24 per cent) and sharing of best practices (31 per cent).

Question D.C.1: Advice on following procurement law: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Question D.C.4: General principles of procurement best practice: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

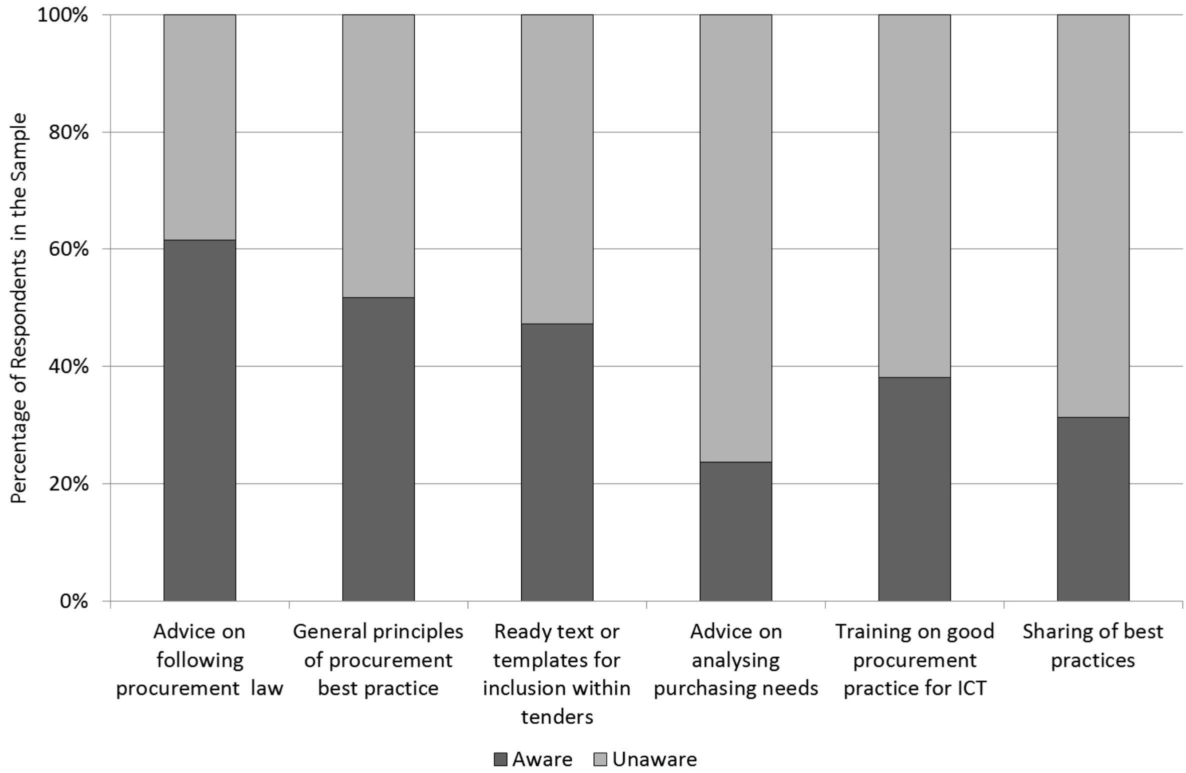
Question D.C.7: Ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Question D.C.10: Advice on analysing purchasing needs: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Question D.C.13: Training on good procurement practice for ICT: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Question D.C.16: Sharing of best practices: Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Figure A2. 12: Awareness of sources of information related to procurement practice



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.C.1, D.C.4, D.C.7, D.C.10, D.C.13 and D.C.16

A1.26 On a country by country level:

(a) In both Slovenia and the UK, fewer than average respondents were aware of sources of advice on following procurement law, whilst in Belgium, Spain and Finland, greater than average numbers knew of sources of such advice.

(b) In Germany, Finland and Italy there were relatively low levels of awareness for sources of information on general principles of procurement best practice. Whilst in the UK, there was good awareness of such a source.

(c) Each of Germany, Sweden, Slovenia and the UK had lower than average levels of awareness of sources of ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders. Belgium, Spain, Finland and Italy all had greater than average proportions of respondents aware of such sources.

(d) Relatively good awareness of sources of information related to advice on analysing purchasing needs was seen in Finland. Whilst particularly bad awareness of such sources was recorded in Belgium (0 per cent) and Slovenia (9 per cent).

(e) In Belgium, Spain and Italy, there were high levels of awareness of sources for training on good procurement practice for ICT. In comparison, Slovenia and the UK recorded relatively low levels of awareness of such sources.

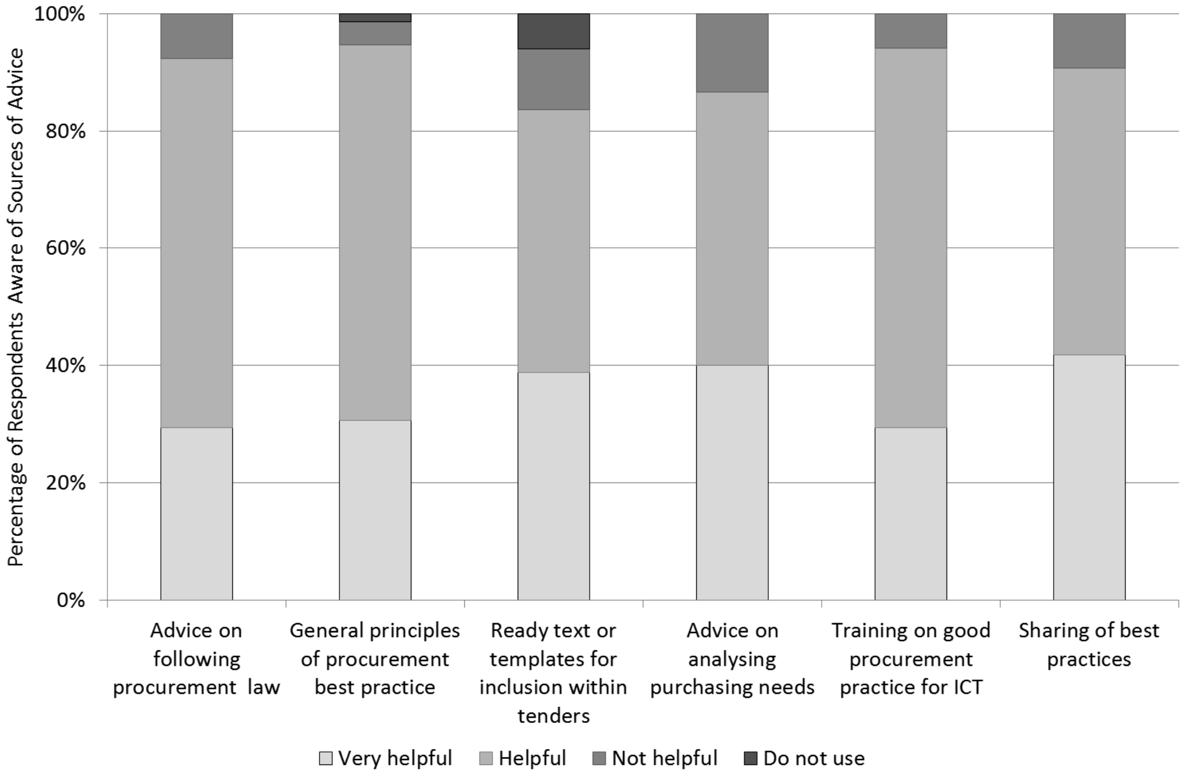
(f) Spain (56 per cent) and the UK (53 per cent) recorded much greater than average awareness of sources of information related to the sharing of best practices. Whilst Germany, Finland, Italy, Sweden and Slovenia showed very low awareness, with levels of awareness in Sweden (12 per cent) particularly low.

A1.27 There was no real evidence of respondents from the Member States where we had identified best practice in each of these areas being more aware or the sources of information than in other countries. An exception perhaps is in training on good procurement practice for ICT, where Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden between them recorded 43 per cent awareness, compared to the sample average of 38 per cent.

A1.28 Of the current sources of information respondents were aware of, the highest percentage of very positive views were given for the sharing of best practices, with 42 per cent of those respondents aware of such a source finding it very helpful. The second highest proportion of very positive views was given on sources of advice on analysing purchasing needs, with 40 per cent of respondents finding these very helpful, followed by ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders, which 39 per cent of respondents found very helpful. However, despite these two sources of information receiving the second and third highest percentages of very positive views, the value of these two information types also proved the most divisive. For ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders, awareness frequently did not lead to use – with six per cent of those aware of such information not making use of it. On top of this six per cent, 10 per cent of respondents noted that they found these pieces of ready text or templates unhelpful. The eleven respondents recording these negative views on the available text or templates were not confined to a particular Member State, but were instead spread across ten different countries. Similarly, for advice on analysing purchasing needs, a relatively high percentage of respondents (13 per cent, each from a different country) felt that the information provided was not helpful.

Question D.C.2, D.C.5, D.C.8, D.C.11, D.C.14 and D.C.17: If so, how helpful is it?

Figure A2. 13: Helpfulness of current sources of information related to procurement practice



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.C.2, D.C.5, D.C.8, D.C.11, D.C.14 and D.C.17

A1.29 At the other end of the scale, relatively few respondents (31 per cent) found advice on general principles of procurement best practices to be very helpful, however this was also the area where fewest found the information either not at all helpful or did not use (five per cent). Fewest respondents found advice on following procurement law or training on good procurement practice for ICT very useful (both 29 per cent).

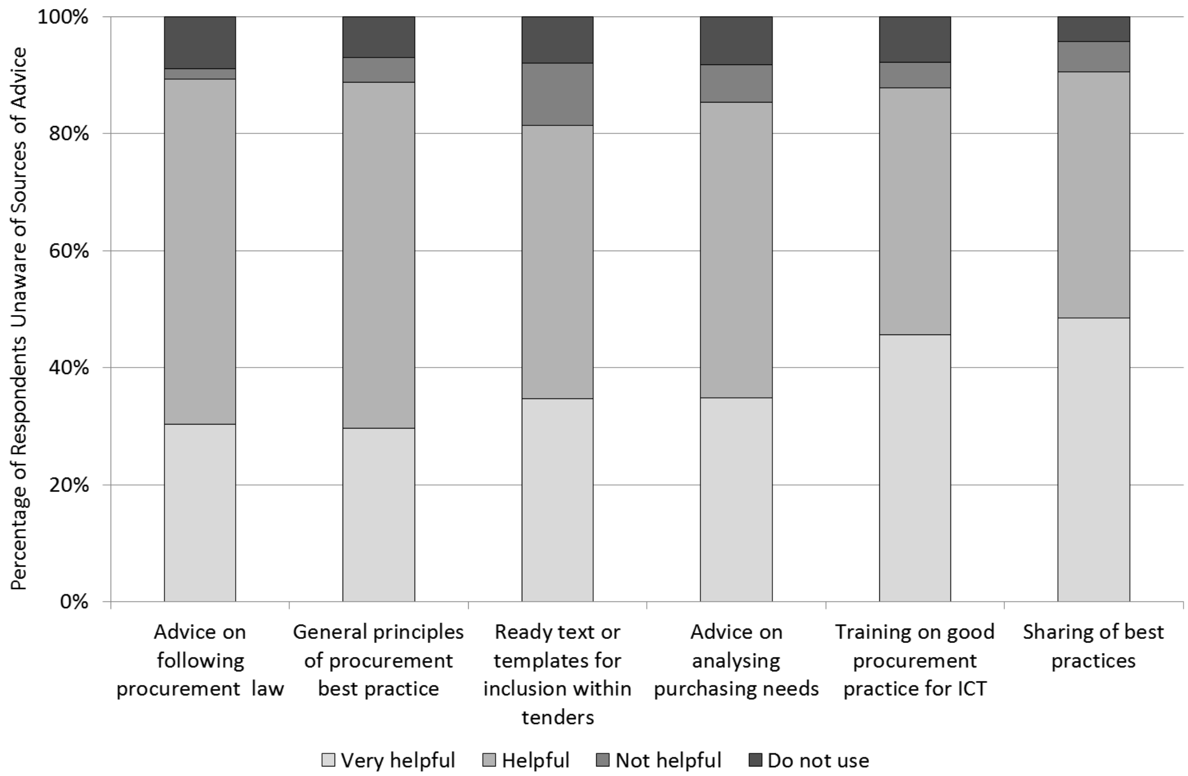
A1.30 Comments:

(a) A public authority in the UK recorded that, although sources were available providing information on general principles of procurement best practice and ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders, they did not find these helpful. They explained that the UK used to maintain a standard template set of documents for ICT procurements and a procurement guide (as well as a set of standards); however, these had not now been formally updated since 2007. They did feel that an update to these documents would be really helpful.

A1.31 For those respondents not aware of current sources of information in each of these areas, the greatest potential value was seen in the provision of a central body to facilitate the sharing of best practices. A total of 48 per cent of respondents expressed the view that such a source would be very helpful, as well as 42 per cent thinking it would be helpful. At four per cent, this measure also had the smallest proportion of respondents that thought they would not make use of such a resource. After this, the next most positive views were expressed on the expected value of the provision of training on good procurement practice for ICT, with 46 per cent of respondents thinking this would be very helpful and 42 per cent expecting it to be helpful.

Question D.C.3, D.C.6, D.C.9, D.C.12, D.C.15 and D.C.18: If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?

Figure A2. 14: Potential value of the provision of sources of information related to procurement practice



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.C.3, D.C.6, D.C.9, D.C.12, D.C.15 and D.C.18

A1.32 The least positive views were expressed on the potential value of the provision of sources of information relating to general principles of procurement best practice and for the provision of advice on following procurement law. In each case, only 30 per cent of respondents thought that such a provision would be very helpful, with an additional 59 per cent thinking they would be helpful. The source of information that the greatest proportion of respondents thought they would not use or would not be helpful was ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders. A total of 11 per cent of respondents thought such a source would not be helpful and another 8 per cent predicted they would not make any use of it.

A1.33 Regarding advice on analysing purchasing needs, 35 per cent of respondents thought this would be very helpful whilst 15 per cent thought either they would not use such a resource or that it would not be helpful.

A1.34 Comments:

(a) A Swedish ICT supplier thought that training on good procurement practice for ICT would be very helpful, since they felt that too many tenders were managed by incompetent individuals on the purchasing side. In some cases, they noticed that the procurement manager had not even been able to correctly spell the necessary procurement terms. Problems had not only been experienced with small tenders, but even for procurements valued in the range of one million euros.

(b) An independent publically funded body in the UK responded that advice on analysing purchasing needs would be very helpful; explaining that clear guidance on how to do a needs assessment would be useful in light of the fast pace of the market place.

(c) A public authority in the Netherlands was concerned that the setting up of specialised supporting institutions for public procurement would pose the major risk of reducing the incentives for procurers to know and understand what they need, what the market offers and what the rules are. They noted that there was already a problem of managers in the public sector rarely being made answerable to costly mistakes in IT procurement and felt that with the specialisation of support there would be a risk of increasing this problem of unaccountability. It was assumed that support specialists would likely have neither the time nor the correct incentives to ensure they really understood the needs of procuring organisations. Instead, the likely outcome was expected to be that the support organisation would develop its own idiosyncratic policies and miss out on the emergence of important innovations in standardisation.

(d) Conversely, two respondents thought that greater centralisation would be very beneficial. An ICT supplier from Sweden complained that the current mechanisms for public procurement were too dependent on the competence of the individual or body managing the procurement. Instead, they felt that a national board or body should be set up to manage all public procurements. Similarly, a public authority in Germany recommended the centralisation of all general or standardisable procurement in one national authority. They noted that such centralised authorities already existed in Germany at a central state level and state level, but that it would be beneficial to extend this centralisation to the creation of just one public authority to support local government procurement in all 1,100 municipalities. They felt that such a central procurement authority would increase the quality and range of public procurement, bringing about the best technology and value for money to local government. However, they recognised that this might not be legally possible in Germany.

A1.4.4 Provision of help with ICT standards

A1.35 Respondents were asked if there existed any central body in their Member State promoting the use of ICT standards through different types of information (for example, the Dutch Standardisation Board and Forum). In general, the level of awareness of bodies providing help with ICT standards in Member States was far lower than the awareness of sources of information related to procurement practice (as explored in the previous section of the questionnaire). The awareness of sources of types of information related to procurement practice ranged from 31 per cent to 62 per cent, whilst the awareness of types of information promoting the use of ICT standards ranged from 16 per cent to 26 per cent.

A1.36 The types of information the largest proportion of respondents were aware they had access to were published catalogues of appropriate ICT standards and assessments made of existing ICT standards (both 26 per cent). The next highest level of access availability was for the provision of ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards (24 per cent). The two types of information that respondents had lowest access to were advice on which ICT standards to use for particular needs (23 per cent) and ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders (16 per cent).

Question D.D.1: Undertake assessments of existing ICT standards: Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

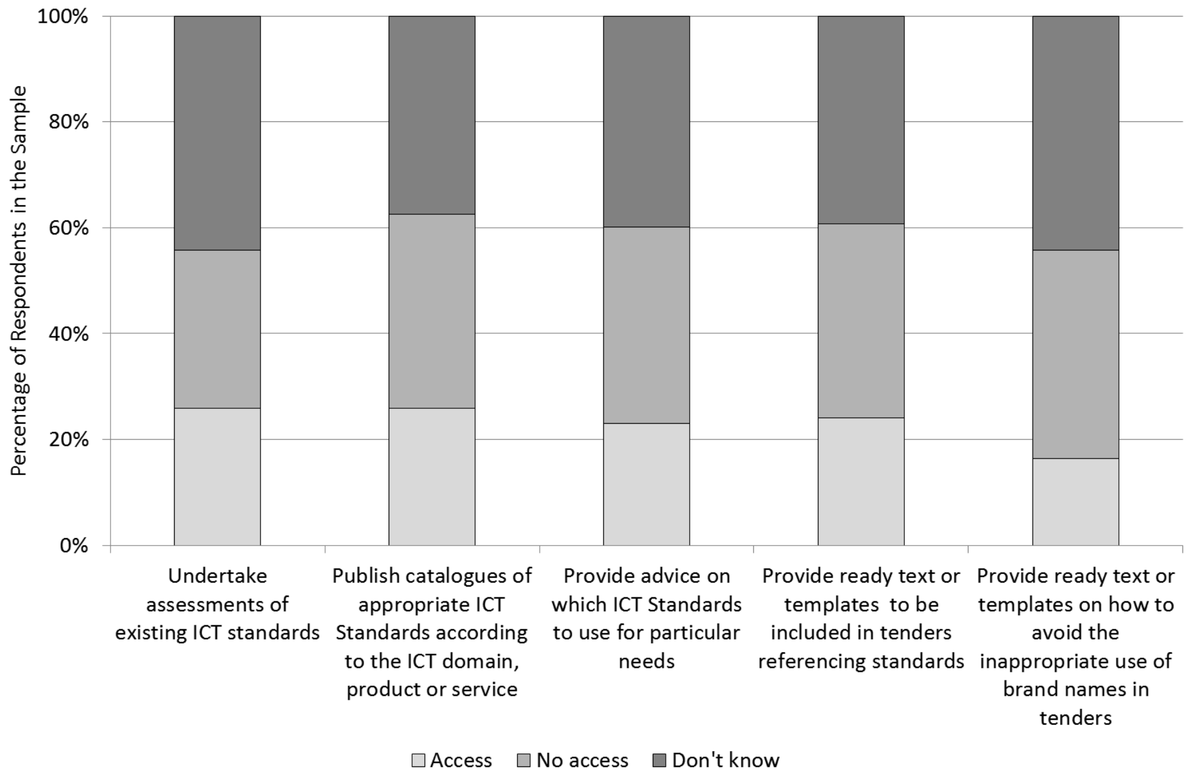
Question D.D.4: Publish catalogues of appropriate ICT Standards according to ICT domain, product or service: Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

Question D.D.7: Provide advice on which ICT Standards to use for particular needs: Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

Question D.D.10: Provide ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards: Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

Question D.D.13: Provide ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders: Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

Figure A2. 15: Availability of access to sources of information providing help with ICT standards



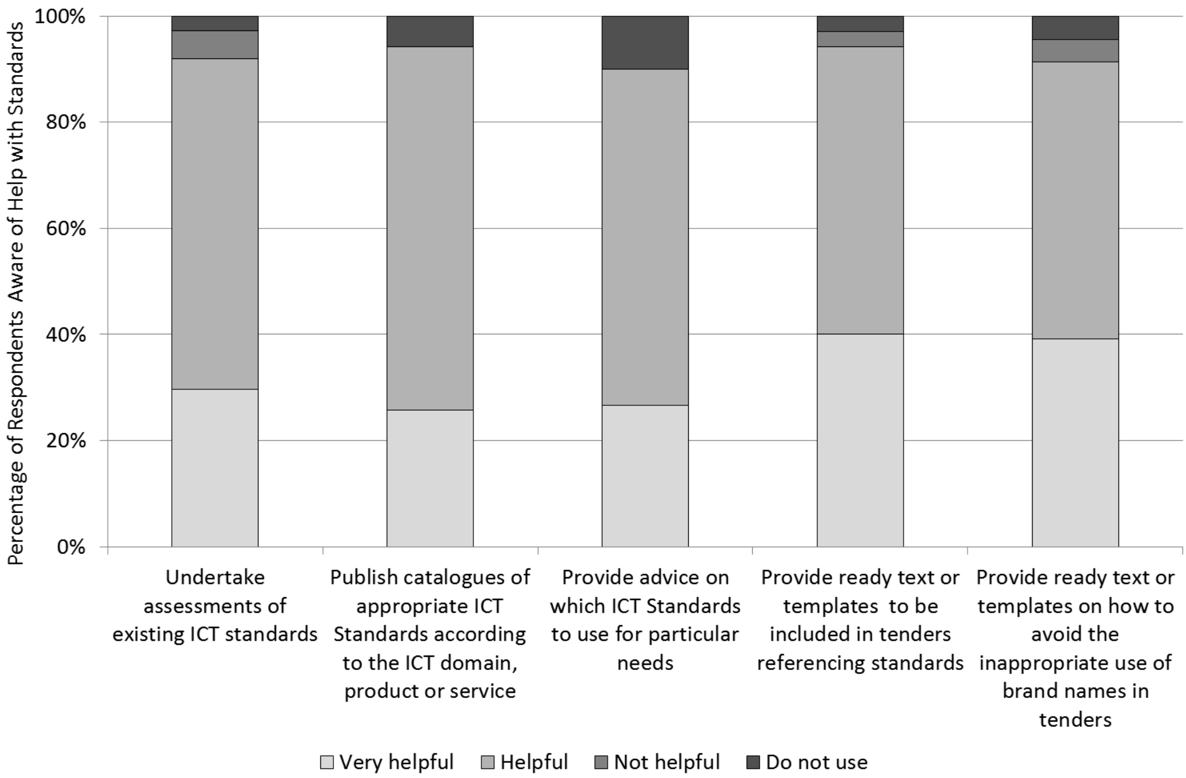
Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.D.1, D.D.4, D.D.7, D.D.10 and D.D.13

A1.37 For each of the different types of information, the level of knowledge on access availability was roughly equal, with between 37 per cent and 44 per cent of respondents not knowing whether they had access to such sources of information in each case.

A1.38 Respondents then evaluated how much value they felt they derived from current access to sources of information providing help with ICT standards. The type of information respondents felt was most helpful to have access to was the provision of ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards – 40 per cent of respondents found this very helpful. After this, the next most useful resources were ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders (39 per cent) and assessments undertaken on existing ICT standards (30 per cent). The two least useful sources were perceived to be the published catalogues of appropriate ICT standards (26 per cent) and advice provided on which ICT standards to use for particular needs (27 per cent).

Question D.D.2, D.D.5, D.D.8, D.D.11 and D.D.14: If yes, how helpful is it?

Figure A2. 16: Value of current access to sources of information providing help with ICT standards



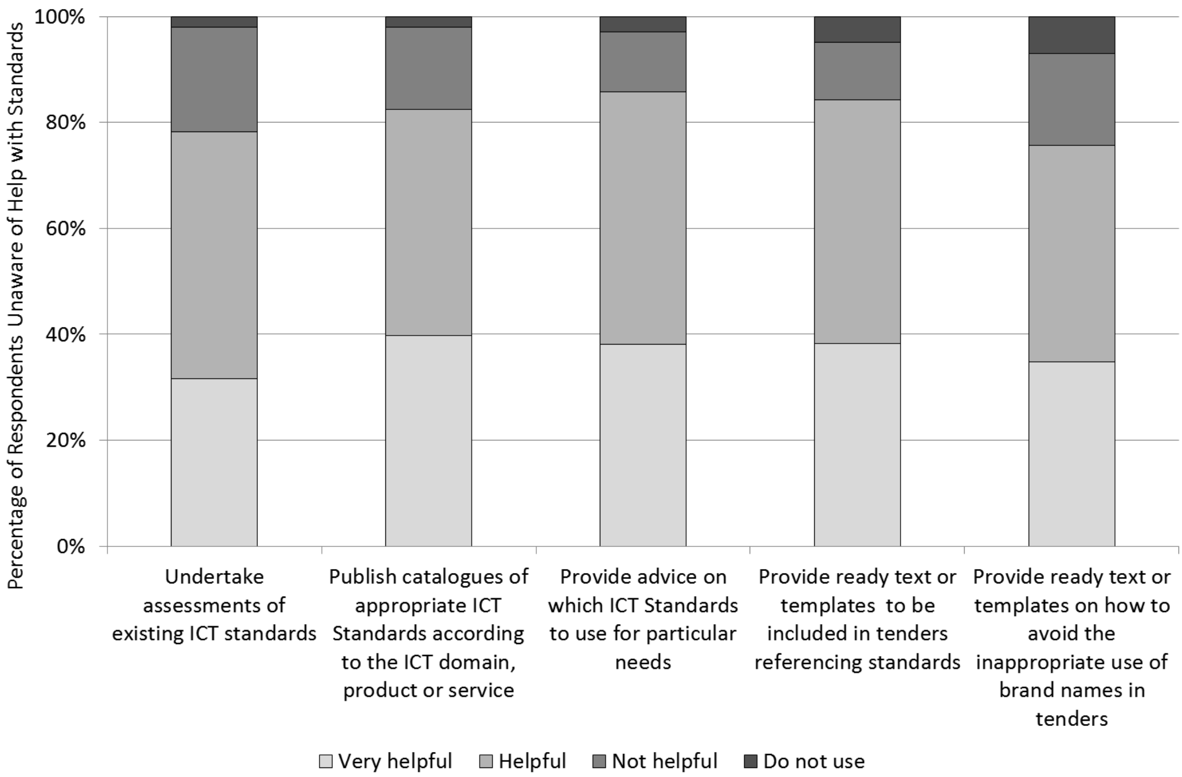
Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.D.2, D.D.5, D.D.8, D.D.11 and D.D.14

A1.39 Those respondents who either were aware they did not have access to, or did not know if they had access to a source providing the different types of information then gave an opinion on how valuable they felt access to such a source would be. The most potential value was seen to lie in the provision of published catalogues of appropriate ICT standards, with 40 per cent of respondents thinking this would be very helpful and an additional 43 per cent thinking it would be helpful. This is in contrast to the feelings of those respondents who already had access to such a resource, where this was seen to be the least useful of all the five resources.

A1.40 After this, the information source from which it was expected that the second highest value could be derived was advice on which ICT standards to use for particular needs– 38 per cent of respondents thought such a catalogue would be very helpful and an additional 48 per cent thought it would be helpful. A similar amount of value was expected to be gained from access to ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards; 38 per cent of respondents recorded a very positive view, expecting such advice to be very helpful, whilst only 16 per cent felt that either they would not make use of this advice source or the advice provided would not prove helpful.

Question D.D.3, D.D.6, D.D.9, D.D.12 and D.D.15: How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?

Figure A2. 17: Potential value of access to sources of information providing help with ICT standards



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question D.D.3, D.D.6, D.D.9, D.D.12 and D.D.15

A1.41 Access to a source of information providing ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders was expected to be very helpful by 35 per cent of respondents, but with a high number also thinking that it would not be helpful (17 per cent), or would not be used (seven per cent). Similarly, a relatively large proportion of respondents felt that having a central body provide assessments of existing ICT standards would not be helpful (20 per cent) or would not be used (two per cent), compared to the 32 per cent thinking it would be very helpful.

A1.42 Comments:

(a) An ICT supplier from Germany noted that the value derived from undertaking assessments of existing ICT standards varies depending on the area to which the standards relate, though overall they thought such assessments were very helpful. They felt that important areas should be singled out and a dedicated evaluation applied. The examples of macro languages of document exchange formats and web standards were given.

(b) A German standards body responded that they had neutral feelings regarding the value of the provision of ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders. This was due to the belief that, as long as the tender included a way to check compliance against standards or specifications, the brand names mentioned met the compliance requirements and the standards used were open, then the inclusion of brands names did not matter. Under these conditions, the inclusion of brand names was just comparable to providing examples of compliant products i.e. the brands named could always be swapped to name the current supplier. The organisation currently operated such a compliance testing programme for hundreds of products.

(c) An independent, publically funded body in the UK felt that clear, brief guidance of rules and regulations/standards that could be applied would be useful. They responded that there were no current sources for advice on which ICT standards to use for particular needs or advice on following procurement law – both of which they felt would be helpful.

(d) A university in Finland noted that occasions frequently occurred when the availability of a source of advice on using standards would be useful. However, such advice should not be followed without thought on the part of procurers, as the use of standards should not be assumed to be practical in every case.

A1.4.5 Additional comments

A1.43 Respondents were invited on provide any additional comments they might have on the improvement of procurement through the better use of standards:

(a) An ICT supplier from Lithuania felt that, in order to increase the actual use of standards in procurement, there would need to be a mandatory requirement for public authorities who wish to procure ICT solutions not based on standards to explicitly argument their decision. In addition, approval to undertake such a procurement should also require approval from a higher level administration body or national public procurement agency. Documents giving the explicit explanation, along with the high level approval, should then form part of the tender conditions.

(b) An ICT supplier from Sweden and a consultant from Greece both doubted procurement would be improved significantly through the better use of Standards in situations where the procuring authority already has a preferred supplier in mind. They noted that the flexibility procurers have in their choice of evaluation procedure means that, even if tenders included more references to standards, the evaluation procedure could still be pre-arranged to favour one supplier (for instance, by crediting "soft subjective values" higher than price or quality).

(c) A Belgian public authority felt that, due to the low level of knowledge typically held by procurers, a greater use of standards would make the procurement process easier for them. However, a university in the UK felt that standards in any form, open or proprietary, could only be implemented successfully if all of the parties using them fully understood both the standard and the framework within which it needed to be used. They felt that this would require procurers, implementers and suppliers to all receive better training in the standards, frameworks, supporting tools and infrastructure. In addition, training would need to be reinforced by experience – with the production of detailed, open worked examples required. Without this, the respondent was concerned that the implementation for each standard would become proprietary and the value of the standard subsequently reduced.

(d) An ICT supplier from Germany expressed the view that, in order to improve procurement through the better use of Standards, it would be absolutely critical to define clearly, and in language that could be commonly understood, what standards are, which standards were to be accepted and who had the authority to define future standards. Similarly, a policy group from France felt that a clear definition of what standards are, in particular describing the valuable characteristics of open standards, would be essential to ensure public bodies benefit the most from their IT choices.

(e) A German ICT supplier felt it was very important to have the same standards used by all public authorities across Europe. Similarly, a policy group in Belgium thought that public procurement processes should not be fragmented and divergent between different Member States, but instead should be used to support the development of the EU single market. Backing up these views, a standards authority in Belgium highlighted the importance of an integrated approach to standards issues. They recommended that pre-standardisation activities should be undertaken at a European level, more work should be done to bring European requirements in line with international standards and European Standards should be prepared whenever this is possible and relevant.

(f) A public authority in Germany highlighted that, although they agreed that following standards in procurement was a good idea in theory, the costs involved in such practices also needed to be considered. Additional resources would be required to conduct such procurements and the operational risk would be higher. In some cases, it could therefore be more costly to follow standards than to be locked in; examples given of MS-Office, SAP, Oracle and SAS.

(g) A standards body in Belgium put forward the view that European Standards do play an important role in the European public procurement market. These standards allowed public authorities to set clearer tender specifications and enabled a more transparent procurement process, of particular benefit to SMEs. They also believed that the promotion of the use of European Standards in public procurement would aid the achievement of other societal goals, such as environment protection, energy efficiency, innovation and social inclusion.

(h) A public authority in Sweden highlighted the importance of considering transaction, learning and adjustment costs when undertaking ICT procurement. Since each of these were dependent on the current IT structure and competence within individual organisations, work towards more open standards should help to make these transitional costs decrease in general in the future. However, the respondent was concerned that the current procurement laws in Sweden did not facilitate procurement based upon best value for taxpayer's money in this way, with processes subjected to a high degree of bureaucracy and unreasonably lengthy court trials.

(i) An independent, publically funded body in the UK commented that they felt that most IT contracts were currently extremely biased towards apportioning risk to the purchasing organisation rather than the supplier. Purchasing organisations typically held the risk of projects overrunning their budget or IT providers not delivering final products of systems or software that were actually fit-for-purpose. They were concerned that the implementation of standards such as running speeds could prove prohibitive for some IT suppliers, causing them to go out of business and hence lead to a reduction in competition in the market.

Question D.E.1: Any additional comments on the improvement of procurement through the better use of Standards?

A1.5 Part 4 – Wider Impacts

Question E.1: In your opinion, would an increased focus on ICT Standards in the procurement of ICT goods and services have an effect on:

Question E.1.1: The use of brand names or proprietary technical specifications in tenders

Question E.1.2: Number of suppliers responding to public ICT procurement tenders

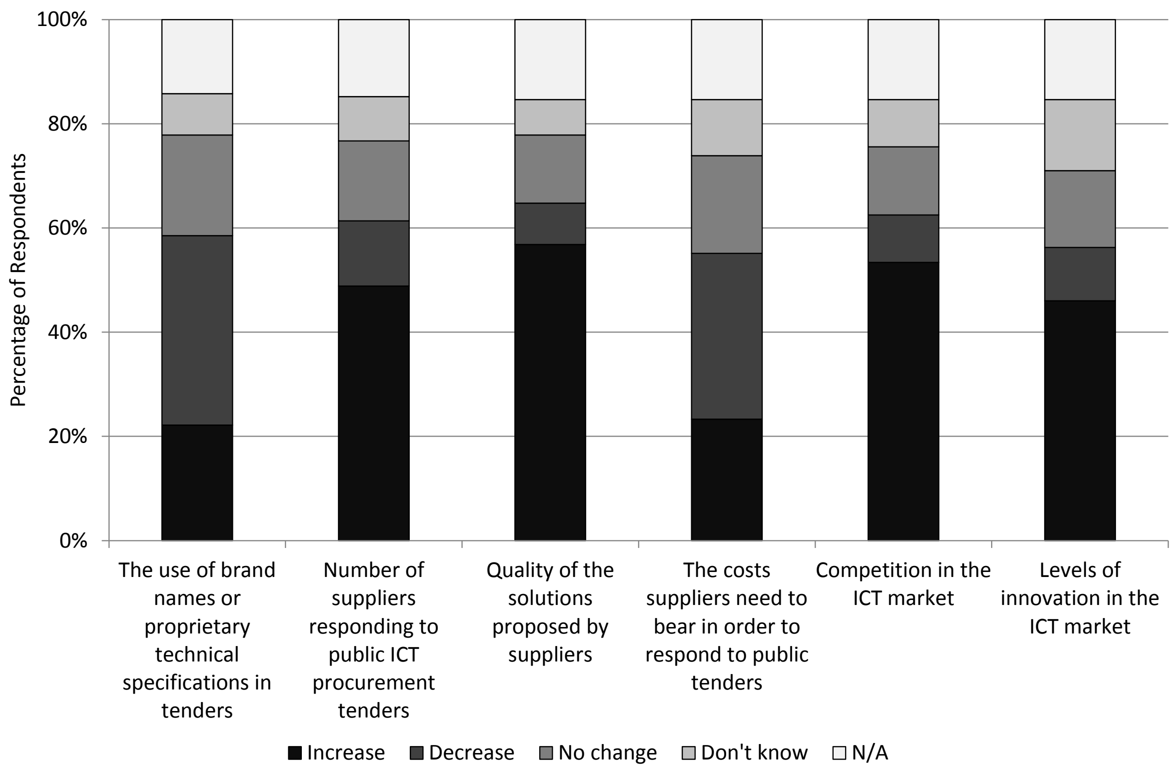
Question E.1.3: Quality of the solutions proposed by suppliers

Question E.1.4: The costs suppliers need to bear in order to respond to public tenders

Question E.1.5: Competition in the ICT market

Question E.1.6: Levels of innovation in the ICT market

Figure A2. 18: Effects of an increased focus on ICT Standards in the procurement of ICT goods and services



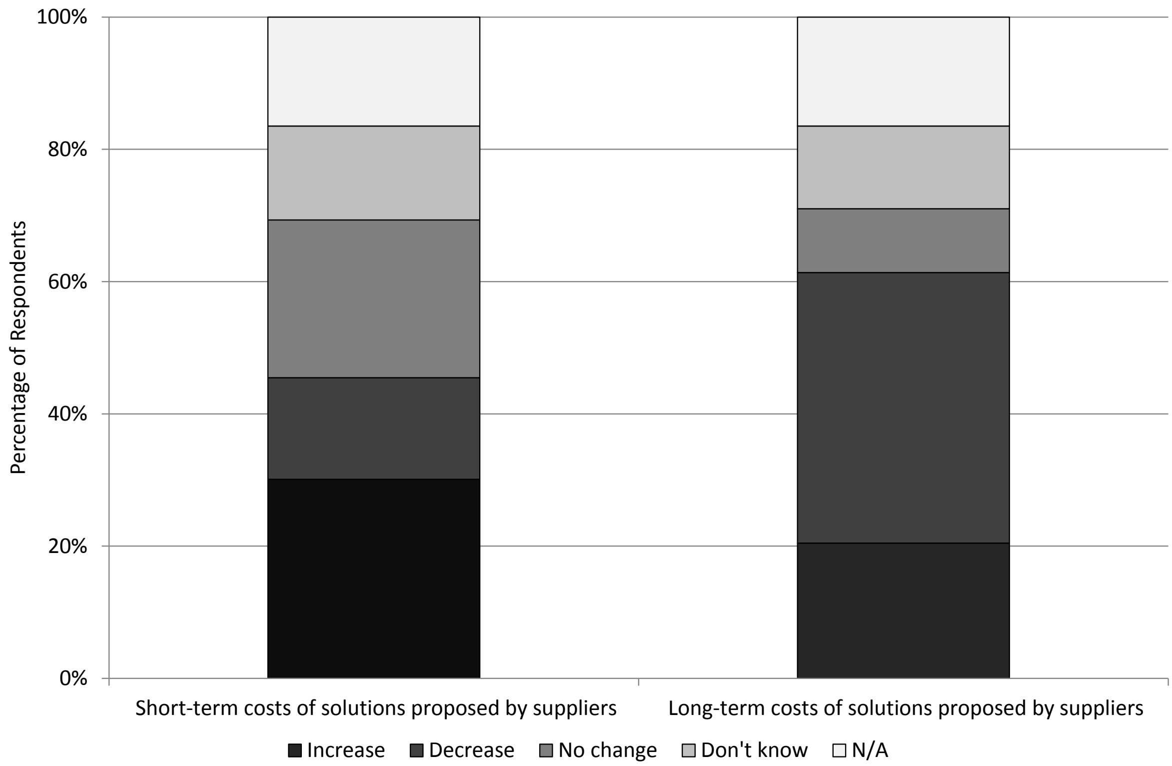
Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question E.1

Question E.2: Would public authorities requesting standards-based ICT systems have an effect on:

Question E.2.1: Short-term costs of solutions proposed by suppliers

Question E.2.2: Long-term costs of solutions proposed by suppliers

Figure A2. 19: Availability of access to sources of information providing help with ICT standards



Source: Europe Economics Standards Survey Question E.2