

# **BUILD Project - D4.2 Report on Staff Exchanges to Support Mutual Learning**

June 2024



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5	TARTU LINN	Tartu	EE
6	GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM	Rotterdam	NL

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## 1 Objective of the WP and task

Across the European Union, member states are implementing a range of initiatives to enhance the skills and capabilities of procurement professionals. These initiatives include the development of competency frameworks, the introduction of mandatory certifications, the establishment of comprehensive training strategies, and the provision of e-learning opportunities. The professionalisation of procurement practitioners is becoming increasingly crucial to ensure that procurement processes are both regulatory-compliant and cost-effective.

This task consisted of the organisation and implementation of three international short-term staff exchanges, aimed to facilitate mutual learning, share knowledge on best practices in innovative public procurement, and encourage discussions on common challenges. These exchanges involved personnel from the city of Turku, Tartu and Rotterdam. The exchanges, aimed at public procurement experts, lasted one and a half working days in each city, excluding travel time. The Lead Beneficiary of Work Package 4.2 is the city of Turku.

## 2 Planning of the staff exchanges

### 2.1 Target groups

The intended participants for this initiative were staff members, especially those specialising in public procurement, from the cities of Turku, Tartu, and Rotterdam.

### 2.2 Collecting feedback from the staff in Tartu, Rotterdam & Turku

To gather input on the upcoming staff exchanges and plan the agenda and training content in the most useful way, Turku created a Google Forms survey shared with Tartu and Rotterdam. The questions focused on gathering feedback and practical insights from the participating partners about what they hoped to learn from the exchanges.

Through this survey, Turku sought ideas and preferences from the staff regarding the potential themes and activities that could be included in these exchanges. Eventually, the exchange program was designed including the responses, but also other information. Specifically, this information was generated from the workshops organised under Work Package 2, Task 2.2 “Enhancing the interest of enterprises in innovation procurements”. The preparatory survey questions were:

- *What would you like to learn from the visitors?*

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- *What could we present/tell the visitors?*
  - *What themes would you like to have covered during staff exchange? Do you have suggestions on how to cover those themes in practice?*
  - *Do you have wishes on work-related activities that your team and visitors could do together?*
  - *Would you be interested in acting as a host/mentor to the visitors for some themes' part that shall be agreed separately?*
  - *Would you be willing to present one of your procurement cases or development works to the visitors in English?*
  - *Would you be interested in non-work-related activities after office hours?*
  - *Would you be interested in taking part in staff exchange as a visitor on your team's behalf?*
  - *Any other comments you want to make?*

### 2.2.1 Post staff exchange lean feedback collection

After each staff exchange, the visiting staff were asked to fill in a shared template with questions aimed at gathering feedback from the activity, to make the reporting for D4.2 leaner. In this way, the reflections and learnings were more accessible to all and already organised. The questions that were asked to be reflected on were:

- *What was done differently in the host city compared to yours?*
- *Were there any procedures that stood out which your team could adopt?*
- *Did some of the host cities' procedures or practical implementations surprise you?*
- *What else would you like to bring to the attention of your own team?*
- *The topics and issues that sparked discussion during the staff exchange?*
- *Number of participants?*

## 3 Staff exchanges in Finland, Estonia and The Netherlands

This section aims to provide a detailed overview of each staff exchange, its program, feedback, comments, and learnings from each participating partner.

### 3.1 Finland

#### 3.1.1 General information

The staff exchange in Finland took place in Turku on April 24-25. It was hosted by the Procurement Services Department of the City of Turku. Turku, the sixth largest city in Finland, has a population of just over 200,000

citizens. We welcomed four colleagues from Rotterdam and one from Tartu. The guests from Rotterdam were: Nalinie Koendjibharie, Jennyfer Spencer, Nasim Zolfali and Simon de Roo. From Tartu our guest was Mihkel Vijar. From the city of Turku we had around 10 participants each day, including consortium members Susanna Sarvanto-Hohtari, Jere Lumikko and Hedy Meinander. Consortium members Riikka Leskinen and Anni Lahtela from Valonia also joined the staff exchange in Turku.

### 3.1.2 Finland staff exchange agenda

#### Agenda

<b><u>Wednesday 24.04.2024 9.00-10.00 at the office on Yliopistonkatu 27 A, 20100 Turku.</u></b>
Welcoming words, Presentation to guests about the procurement services in the city of Turku, objectives of the procurement and city strategy, a public procurement training “Vastuullinen hankkija”, annual planning, defining procurement needs, and evaluation tool for innovation potentials.
<b><u>10.00-10.30</u></b> Break
<b><u>10.30-11.30</u></b> Presentation on market motivation and engagement, citizen involvement, and utilization of contract and tender surveys. Presentation about Valonia.
<b><u>11.30-12.30</u></b> Lunch
<b><u>12.45-13.15</u></b> Guided tour at the City Library
<b><u>13.30-14.30</u></b> Innovative procurement processes of Tartu & Rotterdam
<b><u>14.30</u></b> Start walking to the Turku Castle
<b><u>15.30-16.30</u></b> Guided tour at Turku Castle
<b><u>Thursday 25.04.2024 at the main office on Yliopistonkatu 27 A, 20100 Turku.</u></b>
<b><u>09.00-10.00</u></b> Category strategy, chemical-wise procurements, citizen involvement cases
<b><u>10.00-10.15</u></b> Break
<b><u>10.15-11.15</u></b> Innovative case procurements – Case Hirvensalo ski center
<b><u>11.15-12.00</u></b> Lunch
<b><u>12.00 - 13.00</u></b> Walking around and watching procurements in the city. Goodbye



*Figure 1 - Finland staff exchange participants. From the left: Jennyfer Spencer, Nasim Zolfali, Jere Lumikko, Susanna Sarvanto-Hohtari, Hedy Meinander, Mihkel Vijar, Taru Marjamäki, Simon de Roo and Nalinie Koendjibharie outside the office in Turku.*



*Figure 2 - Welcome in the first morning*



*Figure 3 - Tour in the city library and its innovative procurements*



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### 3.1.3 Observations and conclusions

#### 3.1.3.1 Summary of Rotterdam's Feedback on the staff exchange in Turku

##### 1. Differences in procurement practices:

- Turku manages different procurement categories, such as school lunches, which are overseen by the province rather than the city, unlike Rotterdam.
- Healthcare responsibility in Turku lies with the province, whereas in Rotterdam, it falls under city jurisdiction.
- Turku utilizes an innovative app to identify potential successful procurements, a practice not currently employed in Rotterdam.
- Unlike Rotterdam, where contract management and project management are separate functions, Turku integrates these roles under the buyer.
- In Rotterdam national tendering is a choice, they do not have to do it according to the procurement law. Otherwise, the procedures used are quite similar.

##### 2. Surprising practices and implementations:

- Turku's innovative procurement app and the significant citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

##### 3. Areas to be highlighted and import in home practices:

- Consideration of transitioning healthcare responsibility from the city to the province, as done in Turku.
- Exploration of procuring school lunches, currently managed by the province in Turku.
- Adoption of an app similar to Turku's for identifying innovative procurement opportunities.
- Review of departmental structures, particularly how tasks are managed across different departments.
- Implementation of category management, with awareness that Turku employs different categorization practices.
- Integration of project management and contract management roles, a consolidated approach seen in Turku.

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#### **4. Key topics and issues that sparked discussion during the exchange:**

- Shifting healthcare responsibilities from city to provincial authority.
- Strategies for school lunch procurement.
- Utilization of technology, such as innovative procurement apps.
- Organizational alignment across departments.
- Differences in category management practices.
- The combined role of project and contract management in Turku.

### **3.1.3.2 Summary of Tartu's Feedback on the staff exchange in Turku**

#### **1. Differences in procurement practices:**

- Turku operates with a centralized procurement department, issuing slightly more tenders than Tartu. Additionally, Turku engages in extensive collaboration with neighbouring municipalities for procurement support.
- Turku utilizes an innovation potential assessment questionnaire for larger procurements to evaluate innovation opportunities, a practice not currently employed in Tartu.
- Unlike Tartu, Turku maintains and enforces a list of prohibited chemical compounds in procured products.
- The role of contract supervisor in Turku is handled by a procurement specialist, whereas in Tartu, this role may differ.
- Decision-making processes in Turku, such as involving children and parents in selecting playground equipment, differ from those in Tartu.

#### **2. Surprising practices and implementations:**

- Turku's maintenance and application of a list of prohibited chemical compounds in procured products.
- The role of procurement specialist as contract supervisor in Turku, contrasting with practices in Tartu.

#### **3. Areas to be highlighted and import in home practices:**

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- Consideration of implementing an Innovation Potential Assessment Questionnaire for evaluating innovation opportunities in larger procurements.
  - Increased focus on environmental protection, climate goals, and managing dangerous substances in procurement processes.

#### **4. Turku's comments on the exchange:**

- The hosts from the Procurement Department in Turku, including consortium members Susanna Sarvanto-Hohtari, Jere Lumikko, and Hedy Meinander, shared positive feedback regarding the staff exchange. They appreciated the rare opportunity to meet international counterparts engaged in similar municipal work but in different cities. Despite the diverse sizes and contexts of the cities involved, they found common ground in shared challenges.
- Having interacted primarily over Zoom for the past eighteen months, meeting face-to-face was a significant and enjoyable experience. Participants valued the chance to build personal connections and engage in direct conversations, which they found more conducive to meaningful dialogue. Throughout the exchange, the atmosphere was relaxed and collaborative, with discussions flowing naturally across various topics.
- The productive discussions left participants eager for more. They felt the exchanges could have continued indefinitely, highlighting the value of such collaborative platforms. Looking ahead, they looked forward to future staff exchanges as opportunities to deepen professional insights and foster ongoing cooperation.

## **3.2 Estonia**

### **3.2.1 General information**

The staff exchange in Estonia was held in Tartu on May 14-15. Tartu is the second largest city in Estonia, after Tallinn, with a population of approximately 100,000, making it significantly smaller than both Rotterdam and Turku. The city of Tartu does not have a separate procurement department. The visit was held at the Department of Communal Services, which does procurements related to landscaping and cleaning services, environmental services and road services.

The participants from Rotterdam were Rianne van Bochove, Sharon van Veen and Michiel Verkaik M. The participants from Turku were Taru Marjamäki and Hedy Meinander and from Tartu Jaanus Tamm, Mihkel Vijar, Marion Kade and Liina Helmoja.

### 3.2.2 Estonia staff exchange agenda

<b>Agenda</b>
<b><u>Day 1, Tuesday, May 14</u></b>
<b>8:45 - 9:00</b> Gathering at the conference room Venue: Raekoja plats 3, II floor
<b>9:00 - 10:00</b> Procurement procedure and strategy of Tartu. Overview of the procurement services in Tartu
<b>10:00 - 10:30</b> Overview of the procurement services in Turku
<b>10:30 - 11:00</b> Overview of the procurement services in Rotterdam
<b>11:00 - 12:00</b> Discussions
<b>12:00 - 13:30</b> Lunch at Dorpat restaurant
<b>13:30</b> Excursion on city bikes to Annelinn and back. Start from behind Town Hall on Tartu Smart Bike Share electric bicycles
<b>14:00 - 14:30</b> Visit to Tartu Hansa School
<b>14:45 - 15:15</b> Visit to Tartu Annelinna Gymnasium. Tour of different innovation procurement sites throughout Annelinn and Ropka districts
<b>17:00</b> End of excursion behind Town Hall
<b>19:00</b> Dinner at Kolm Tilli, Kastani 42
<b><u>Day 2, Wednesday, May 15</u></b>
<b>8:50 - 10:00</b> Tour of Tartu Nature House
<b>10:30 - 11:30</b> Pre-procurement technical dialogue with Rahel Klaas, CIVITTA
<b>11:30 - 12:00</b> Discussions and wrap-up
<b>12:00 - 13:30</b> Lunch at Dorpat restaurant
<b>13:30</b> End of the program

### 3.2.3 Overall observations and conclusions

#### 1. Differences in Procurement Practices:

- In Tartu, procurement is decentralised, with each service department handling its own procurements independently. Procurement contracts are managed by a dedicated department, rather than by

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individual procurers. The visited department focuses on infrastructure and construction procurements, which falls outside the scope of our procurement services in Turku.

## 2. Surprising practices and implementations:

- The juxtaposition of old Soviet-era schools, buildings, and bridges with modern, innovative structures in Tartu was notable. The city's historical context is very present, which was fascinating to observe.
- The actual procurement procedures and implementations are quite similar to those in Finland and Turku.

## 3. Areas to be highlighted and import in home practices:

- **Contract Management:** a dedicated person manages procurement contracts. This approach allows procurers to focus on new acquisitions without being burdened by contract oversight.
- **Decentralized Procurement:** allowing different departments to handle their own procurements could lead to greater expertise in specific areas. In Turku, procurers manage a diverse range of procurements, which can limit their ability to specialize.
- **Collaboration:** Tartu considered collaborating with the department responsible for construction and infrastructure procurements in Turku to establish common goals.
- **Innovative Procurement Guide:** Estonia has a general guide and tool for innovative procurements, but it is only available in Estonian, limiting its accessibility to non-Estonian speakers.

## 4. Key topics and issues that sparked discussion during the exchange

- **Time Constraints:** There is a common challenge of limited time for developing innovative procurements, placing a significant burden on procurers to ensure innovation.
- **Bid Complexity:** All three cities—Tartu, Rotterdam, and Turku—face difficulties in recognizing procurements with innovation potential and often receive too few bids if requirements are too complex.
- **Resource Limitations:** The discussions highlighted a lack of time and money and the complexity of procurement laws, which currently hinder the encouragement of innovative procurements.



Figure 5 - Bike tour on the city's electric bikes and new cycling roads



Figure 4 - Gathering on the first day 14.5.2024



Figure 6 - Visit to Tartu Annelinna Gymnasium

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## 3.3 The Netherlands

### 3.3.1 General information

The staff exchange in Rotterdam, took place on May 29-30. Rotterdam, with approximately 650,000 residents, is the second-largest city in the Netherlands and the largest city within the BUILD project consortium. This event marked the final staff exchange included in the BUILD project. The participants from Turku were Liisa Yli-Yrjänäinen and Hedy Meinander and the participant from Tartu was Sirle Sõstra-Oru.

### 3.3.2 The Netherlands staff exchange agenda

<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Day 1: Wednesday, May 29</b>
<b>Address:</b> Wilhelminakade 179, Room 18.23
<b>Morning:</b>
<b>10:00 – 10:30</b> Welcome and program overview
<b>10:30 - 11:00</b> General presentation
<b>11:00</b> Simon de Roo on Sustainability in Rotterdam
<b>11:30</b> Bas Oosterom on medium-sized companies
<b>12:00</b> Morning wrap-up (Simon)
<b>12:30 - 13:30</b> Joint lunch in Room 39.65
<b>Afternoon</b>
<b>13:30</b> Travel to Timmerhuis by metro
<b>14:00</b> Jochem Cooman on innovation in the Vonk space, 1st floor
<b>14:30</b> Sharon van Veen on innovation within area development, Space 1.402b
<b>15:00</b> Tour of innovative tender processes by bike or on foot
<b>17:00</b> Finish
<b>Day 2: Thursday, May 30</b>
<b>Address:</b> Timmerhuis, Half-moon Passage
<b>Morning</b>
<b>09:00 - 10:00</b> Presentation by Tartu and Turku
<b>10:00 - 11:00</b> Presentation by Jetske Tamboezer at Timmerhuis on library tender and innovation

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<b>11:00 - 12:00</b> Wrap-up
<b>Afternoon</b>
<b>12:00</b> Lunch at Thoms and farewell to visitors
<b>13:00</b> End

### 3.3.3 Observations and conclusions

#### 3.3.3.1 Summary of Turku's Feedback on the staff exchange in Rotterdam

##### 1. Differences in procurement practices:

- In Rotterdam, unlike Turku, the procurer is not responsible for contract management, dedicating substantial time to managing and resolving contract issues collaboratively with other departments. Additionally, Rotterdam's procurement process is more flexible, as procurements only need to be sent to 3-5 companies when the price is below €221,000, compared to Finland's requirement to nationalise procurements exceeding €60,000. This allows Rotterdam to better support local businesses and stimulate the local economy.
- Rotterdam's progressive system where procurers' salaries and titles increase with experience, as well as the organisation of procurement departments divided by procurement type, such as IT or social procurements. This specialisation contrasts with Turku's approach where the department handles all procurements without distinction.

##### 2. Surprising practices and implementations:

- Absence of a national threshold and the separation of procurement and contract management roles.
- Sustainability map ("we buy a better world") and ambitious sustainability questions.

##### 3. Areas to be highlighted and import in home practices:

- The local procurement approach in the Netherlands could be considered for sub-national threshold procurements in Turku to better support local businesses.
- Rotterdam's long-standing practice of using public procurement to assist people distanced from the labour market is an initiative that Turku could expand, encompassing both large and small procurements.



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- The Cairo system in Rotterdam, which logs all procurements and time spent on each, provides managers with valuable insights for decision-making and tracks market research and other metrics. This system could greatly enhance procurement efficiency and provide useful statistics in Turku.
  - Adopting Rotterdam's progressive system for salaries and specialised department's structure allowing to focus the work on different procurement types. Adopting a similar specialisation could improve efficiency and develop expertise within the Turku team.
  - Adopt sustainability map guided by ambitious sustainability questions.

#### **4. Key topics and issues that sparked discussion during the exchange:**

- Employment of people distanced from the labour market via procurement.
- National thresholds.
- Citizen participation in procurement.

### **3.3.3.2 Summary of Tartu's Feedback on the staff exchange in Rotterdam**

#### **1. Differences in procurement practices:**

- The procurement of services in Rotterdam is organised differently: the local government employs a total of 14,000 workers responsible for maintaining the city, including interesting development specialists.
- In the Netherlands, school meals, particularly hot meals, are not offered. Students typically bring their own food, usually sandwiches. There is an initiative to start offering hot school meals, but the process is lengthy, and its eventual outcome is uncertain. In contrast, Estonia's approach to catering in educational institutions is well-organized. There is provision of hot meals, and children from low-income families benefit from this service without the concern of having to bring their own sandwiches.

#### **2. Surprising practices and implementations:**

- The Finnish employment program, which leverages procurement to reduce unemployment.
- Rotterdam's active engagement in constructing modern high-rises, offering impressive views and innovative work environments.

- Learning about Rotterdam and its architecture affected by the war, and how this is related to the opportunity and duty to create a modern and innovative city, preserving the old history (represented by the Town Hall and post office, the only buildings that have survived).



*Figure 7- Visit at the City Hall*



*Figure 8,9 - Visit at the innovation centre Vonk*

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## 4 Collective learnings and summary

The staff exchanges were designed based on the results of the workshops and a questionnaire sent to personnel in Tartu, Turku, and Rotterdam. Staff members expressed a desire for concrete examples and an understanding of how other cities handle common challenges such as recognising innovative procurements, managing time and budget constraints, engaging working groups and citizens, and developing innovative methods.

During the staff exchanges, partners reciprocally shared their processes and strategies for achieving more innovative procurements in their cities. Practical examples, strategies, and supporting documents, detailing everything from planning to contract completion were presented, allowing a deep and strategic exchange of information.

The key learning from these exchanges is that all cities aim to increase the number of innovative procurements, recognising their importance and potential. As cities have substantially a theoretical knowledge on implementing innovative procurements, practical examples are still scarce due to the nascent nature of this field. Innovative procurements require significant time, funding, and encouragement. Common challenges include ad hoc procurements, limited resources, and difficulties in recognising innovation potential.

Successful innovative procurement demands collaboration between those making and ordering the procurement (e.g., schools). A correct management of innovation procurement it's not solely a procurer's responsibility; the entire city organisation must understand that procurements play a crucial role in advancing sustainable goals. Increased benchmarking, sharing best practices, and learning from each other's successes and mistakes are essential.