

ETUI conference

Experimentation in buying decent work:

Transforming public procurement policies and practice

Date: 20 November 2025

Time: 9.00-13.00 CET

Venue: DoubleTree by Hilton (Pagoda Meeting Room)

The European Commission's current plans to revise the European Procurement Directives provide a valuable opportunity to review the progress made and the remaining challenges in making public procurement more socially sustainable. The 2014 revision of the Directives has supported EU member states in moving away from 'buying cheap' (lowest price purchasing practices) and towards 'buying decent work' (introducing safeguards to secure labour standards in publicly contracted firms). However, these efforts are still hindered by legal uncertainties due to competition law restrictions, financial constraints and debt reduction targets, as well as entrenched routines and cognitive frameworks among public purchasers. This conference presents findings from several recently concluded research projects (published in *Transfer* 2/2025), which studied novel approaches in EU member states to reorient public procurement towards 'buying decent work'. The presentations will highlight the challenges, trial-and-error processes ('experimentation') and learning processes of public authorities and social partners in dealing with these challenges, thereby providing a rich basis for joint reflection on the policy changes needed at EU and national levels.

AGENDA

09.00 – 09.15	Arrival of participants
	Welcome and introduction
	<i>Speakers</i>
09.15 – 09.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bart Vanhercke, ETUI, Director of the Research department• Karen Jaehrling, University of Duisburg-Essen, Coordinator of <i>Transfer</i> Special Issue
	Session 1: Public procurement of work in the EU context
	Presentation of the <i>Transfer</i> Special Issue – introduction + overview
09.25 – 10.10	<i>Chair:</i> Jane Parker, ETUI/ <i>Transfer</i> <i>Speaker:</i> Karen Jaehrling <i>Discussants:</i> Joakim Smedman, ETUC and Niklas Bruun, University of Helsinki
	Session 2: Labour clauses in different collective bargaining systems
10.10 – 10.50	<i>Chair:</i> Jane Parker <i>Speakers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jens Arnholtz & Trine Larsen, FAOS/Copenhagen: Labour clauses as a complement to collective bargaining - why and how are pay clauses used in a country with high collective bargaining coverage• Simona Brunnerova, CELSI/Bratislava: Labour clauses as a substitute or as a stimulans of collective bargaining in countries with 'hostile conditions'? <i>Discussant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark Bergfeld, UNI Europa• Maurice Rojer, Schiphol Airport
10.50 – 11.15	Coffee break



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11.15 – 12.15	<p>Session 3: From contract to co-management: challenges in implementing and enforcing practices of ‘buying decent work’</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Karen Jaehrling</p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Dorigatti, University of Milan: Challenges and benefits of worker voice in implementing and enforcing labour clauses securing stability of employment (conditions) in publicly procured services • Frank Tros, University of Amsterdam: Better work for bus drivers. How worker involvement helps to avoid buying a black box of services • Francois-Xavier Devetter, IRES/Paris: Beyond Co-Management: Challenges, barriers and effects of reinsourcing <p><i>Discussants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maurice Rojer, Schiphol Airport • Pablo Sánchez Centellas, EPSU
12.15 – 12.30	<p>Summary of key points and closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Jaehrling • Bart Vanhercke
12.30 – 13.30	<i>Lunch</i>