

GENPROCURE

GENDER INCLUSION IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT



Ajuntament d'Alcoi

URBACT



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Alcoi Integrated Action Plan

GenProcure

**Alcoi Integrated
Action Plan for
GenProcure
Action Planning
Network**

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1. Strategic Framework and Multilevel Context

Public procurement represents one of the most powerful policy instruments available to local governments. Through procurement, municipalities do not merely acquire goods, services, or works; they actively shape markets, influence labour conditions, and contribute to the configuration of local economic ecosystems. In the European Union, public procurement accounts for approximately 14% of GDP, making it a strategic lever for achieving broader policy objectives beyond economic efficiency. Within this context, the integration of a gender perspective into public procurement emerges as a critical tool for addressing structural inequalities and promoting inclusive and sustainable development at the local level.

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Gender-Responsive Public Procurement (GRPP) in Alcoi is situated within this broader understanding of procurement as a policy instrument. Rather than treating equality as an isolated or sector-specific issue, the Plan recognises public procurement as a cross-cutting mechanism capable of influencing employment patterns, business practices, and social norms. This approach is fully aligned with contemporary European policy frameworks, which increasingly emphasise the strategic use of public spending to advance social, environmental, and equality objectives.

1.1 EU Policy Framework

At the European level, the legal and policy framework provides a solid foundation for the implementation of GRPP. Directive 2014/24/EU explicitly allows contracting authorities to incorporate social considerations into procurement procedures, provided that these criteria are linked to the subject matter of the contract and comply with principles of transparency, proportionality, and non-discrimination. Furthermore, the European Commission has consistently promoted socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) as a means of achieving the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights, particularly those related to gender equality, equal opportunities, and fair working conditions.

In addition, the European Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 highlights the importance of addressing gender inequalities in the labour market and supporting women's economic empowerment. Public procurement is explicitly identified as a tool that can contribute to these objectives by incentivising companies to adopt equality plans, reduce gender pay gaps, and promote work-life balance. The IAP of Alcoi directly contributes to these European priorities by translating high-level policy commitments into concrete local actions.

1.2 National Policy Framework

At the national level, Spain has developed a robust legal framework in support of gender equality, including Organic Law 3/2007 for the effective equality of women and men, which establishes the obligation for public authorities to actively promote equality across all policy areas. Moreover, Law 9/2017 on Public Sector Contracts incorporates the possibility of including social and equality-related clauses in procurement processes, reinforcing the legitimacy of gender-responsive approaches. However, despite this enabling framework, the practical implementation of gender criteria in procurement remains uneven and largely dependent on the initiative and capacity of individual contracting authorities.

At the regional level, the Valencian Community has adopted strategic documents and regulations that promote equality and social responsibility in public action. These include regional equality plans and guidelines encouraging the inclusion of social clauses in public contracts. The IAP of Alcoi builds upon this regional context, ensuring coherence between municipal action and broader territorial strategies while adapting interventions to the specific characteristics and needs of the local context.

Within this multilevel governance framework, local governments play a crucial role as implementers and innovators. Municipalities such as Alcoi are uniquely positioned to pilot new approaches, test innovative tools, and demonstrate the tangible impact of gender-sensitive procurement on local economies and communities. The proximity of local administrations to citizens and businesses allows for more direct engagement, tailored support measures, and responsive policy design. This makes the local level particularly suitable for advancing GRPP in a practical and measurable way.

The IAP also aligns with global policy agendas, notably the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender-responsive public procurement contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) by promoting women's participation in economic life and addressing discrimination in the labour market. It also supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by encouraging fair working conditions and inclusive economic practices, as well as SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by fostering more sustainable and socially responsible supply chains.

1.3 Summary of Policy Alignment

From a strategic perspective, the integration of GRPP into municipal procurement processes represents a shift from a narrowly defined, cost-driven model toward a value-based approach. This shift does not undermine the principles of efficiency or competition; rather, it enhances them by recognising that long-term economic sustainability is closely linked to social cohesion, equality, and decent work. By incorporating gender criteria into procurement, the City of Alcoi seeks to ensure that public spending generates multiple forms of value: economic, social, and institutional.

The development of this IAP within the framework of the URBACT GenProcure network further strengthens its strategic relevance. URBACT provides a structured methodology for integrated urban development, emphasising participation, cross-sectoral collaboration, and evidence-based policymaking. Participation in the GenProcure network has enabled Alcoi to exchange knowledge with other European cities, learn from good practices, and situate its local challenges within a broader European learning process. This transnational dimension adds robustness and credibility to the Plan, while also facilitating its potential transferability to other municipalities.

In summary, the strategic framework of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi is firmly anchored in European, national, regional, and global policy agendas. It reflects a clear understanding of procurement as a transformative policy tool and positions the City of Alcoi as an active agent in promoting gender equality, social inclusion, and sustainable local development. This multilevel and integrated approach provides the necessary legitimacy, coherence, and strategic depth to ensure that the Plan is not merely a technical document, but a meaningful instrument for long-term institutional change.

1.4 Drafting Process of the Integrated Action Plan

The development of this Integrated Action Plan on gender-responsive public procurement has been carried out through a collaborative and iterative process involving local stakeholders and international partners. The drafting of the document has been closely linked to the learning and exchange activities of the project, ensuring that the content of the plan reflects both the methodological guidance provided by the project framework and the local context of the City Council of Alcoi.

Following each international meeting—both in-person and online—different sections of the plan were progressively drafted. These meetings provided key insights, methodological recommendations, and practical examples from other participating cities and experts. In particular, the guidance provided by the Lead Expert played a central role in shaping the structure and content of the document. After every session, the main conclusions, tools, and recommendations discussed were carefully analysed and translated into concrete actions within the Integrated Action Plan.

This process ensured that the plan evolved in parallel with the knowledge generated throughout the project. Rather than being drafted as a static document at the end of the project period, the plan has been built step by step, incorporating lessons learned, reflections from the international exchanges, and the specific needs identified at the local level.

At the local level, the drafting process has been carried out in close coordination with the Department of Equality of the City Council of Alcoi. Their expertise has been essential to ensure that the measures proposed in the plan are aligned with the municipality's existing equality policies, strategies, and institutional framework. Regular consultations were held with the department in order to review the proposals, discuss their feasibility, and adapt them to the administrative and operational realities of the local government.

In addition, the plan has been continuously reviewed by the Councillor for Equality, who has provided political guidance and oversight throughout the process. This ongoing review has helped ensure that the proposed actions are coherent with the municipality's broader political priorities and commitments in the field of gender equality.

The drafting process has therefore combined international learning with local expertise and political validation. This multi-level approach has made it possible to produce a document that is both technically grounded and institutionally supported. As a result, the Integrated Action Plan represents not only the outcome of the project's knowledge exchange but also a realistic and actionable roadmap for strengthening gender-responsive public procurement within the City Council of Alcoi.

Through this participatory and step-by-step process, the municipality has been able to reflect critically on its current procurement practices, identify opportunities for improvement, and design concrete actions aimed at integrating gender equality considerations into public procurement procedures. The resulting plan reflects a shared commitment between technical staff, political leadership, and international partners to advance more inclusive and equitable public policies through public procurement.

2. Local Diagnosis and Structural Analysis

The development of an effective Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement requires a thorough and realistic understanding of the local context in which it will be implemented. In the case of Alcoi, this diagnosis must take into account the city's economic structure, administrative organisation, labor market dynamics, and existing equality policies. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the current situation, identifying both structural challenges and opportunities that justify and shape the proposed interventions.

2.1 Socioeconomic Context of Alcoi

Alcoi is a medium-sized city with a strong industrial tradition, historically linked to sectors such as textiles, paper manufacturing, and metalworking. Over recent decades, the city has undergone a process of economic transformation, marked by industrial restructuring, the emergence of service-oriented activities, and increasing attention to innovation and sustainability. While this transition has generated new opportunities, it has also exposed structural inequalities in access to employment, entrepreneurship, and economic decision-making.

Women's participation in the local labour market has increased steadily, particularly in the service sector, education, healthcare, cultural activities, and care-related services. However, gender segregation persists both horizontally and vertically. Women remain under-represented in technical, industrial, and leadership positions, while being overrepresented in sectors characterised by lower wages, higher job insecurity, and part-time employment. These structural patterns are directly relevant to public procurement, as municipal contracts often concern precisely those sectors where women's labor is concentrated.

2.2 Structure of Municipal Public Procurement

The City Council of Alcoi manages a significant volume of public contracts each year, covering a wide range of goods, services, and works. These include cleaning and maintenance services, social and cultural programming, catering, urban services, construction works, and technical consultancies. Public procurement therefore represents not only an administrative function but also a key economic driver with the capacity to influence local market behaviour.

Currently, procurement procedures in Alcoi comply with all applicable legal requirements and are conducted with transparency and procedural rigour. However, the dominant logic remains primarily economic, with price often being the decisive criterion. While this approach ensures budgetary control, it limits the capacity of procurement to contribute to broader social objectives, including gender equality.

An analysis of recent tenders indicates that social clauses, when included, tend to be generic and non-binding. Gender-specific considerations are rarely incorporated, and when they are, they are not systematically monitored or evaluated. This reflects a broader structural issue rather than isolated omissions: gender equality has not yet been mainstreamed into procurement as a strategic objective.

2.3 Participation of Women-Led Enterprises

One of the most significant gaps identified in the diagnosis is the limited participation of women-led enterprises in public procurement. Although comprehensive sex-disaggregated data are not currently available, qualitative evidence and indirect indicators suggest that women entrepreneurs

face specific barriers in accessing public contracts. These include limited information about tender opportunities, perceived complexity of administrative procedures, lack of time and resources, and insufficient support mechanisms.

Many women-led businesses in Alcoi operate as micro-enterprises or self-employed activities, particularly in sectors such as cultural production, social services, education, design, and care. These businesses often have strong social value and local roots but may struggle to compete with larger companies in standard procurement processes. Without targeted measures, public procurement risks reinforcing existing market inequalities rather than correcting them.

2.4 Gender Dimension of Contracted Sectors

A sectoral analysis reveals that a significant proportion of municipal contracts are awarded in areas with a predominantly female workforce, such as cleaning services, social care, home assistance, catering, and certain cultural and educational services. Despite this, tender specifications rarely include clauses addressing working conditions, work-life balance, job stability, or pay equity.

As a result, public procurement may inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities by prioritising low-cost offers that rely on precarious labour conditions. This contradiction undermines the municipality's broader equality objectives and highlights the need for a more coherent and responsible approach. Gender-responsive procurement offers a way to align economic efficiency with social justice by setting minimum standards and rewarding good practices.

2.5 Institutional Capacity and Organisational Culture

Another key element of the diagnosis concerns the internal capacity of the municipal administration. Procurement staff and technical officers generally demonstrate a strong commitment to legality and procedural correctness. However, many express uncertainty regarding the incorporation of social and gender criteria, particularly in terms of legal risk and practical implementation.

The absence of standardised tools, templates, and guidelines contributes to this situation. Without clear institutional backing and technical support, individual officials may be reluctant to introduce innovative clauses, even when there is political will to do so. This highlights the importance of capacity building and institutional learning as central pillars of the IAP.

Furthermore, the organisational culture of procurement has traditionally been siloed, with limited coordination between departments responsible for economy, equality, social services, and human resources. Gender-responsive procurement requires a more integrated approach, breaking down administrative silos and fostering collaboration across policy areas.

2.6 Data Gaps and Monitoring Challenges

A critical weakness identified in the diagnosis is the lack of systematic data collection related to gender and procurement. At present, procurement systems do not routinely capture information on the gender composition of bidding companies, management teams, or workforces. Nor do they assess the gender impact of awarded contracts.

This data vacuum limits the municipality's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of existing practices, identify trends, or make evidence-based decisions. It also hampers accountability and transparency, as progress toward equality objectives cannot be reliably measured. Addressing this gap is therefore a prerequisite for any meaningful implementation of GRPP.

2.7 Existing Equality Policies and Their Limitations

Alcoi has demonstrated a strong political commitment to gender equality through its Municipal Equality Plan and related initiatives. These policies address issues such as gender-based violence, work-life balance, representation, and awareness-raising. However, their impact is constrained by limited integration with economic and administrative instruments.

Public procurement has not yet been fully leveraged as a mechanism for implementing equality objectives. This disconnect between policy domains reduces the overall effectiveness of municipal action and represents a missed opportunity. The IAP seeks to bridge this gap by embedding equality considerations directly into one of the municipality's most powerful operational tools.

2.8 Opportunities and Enabling Factors

Despite these challenges, the diagnosis also identifies several enabling factors that support the implementation of GRPP in Alcoi. These include a stable legal framework, political support for equality policies, participation in the URBACT GenProcure network, and the presence of an active local civil society engaged in gender issues.

Additionally, the city's size and administrative structure facilitate experimentation and innovation. Pilot projects can be implemented and monitored relatively quickly, allowing for iterative learning and adjustment. This flexibility is a significant asset in the context of institutional change.

2.9 Summary of Key Diagnostic Findings

In summary, the local diagnosis highlights a combination of structural inequalities, institutional limitations, and unrealised potential. Public procurement in Alcoi is legally sound and economically significant, but it has not yet been strategically mobilised to promote gender equality. Women-led enterprises face barriers to participation, gender inequalities persist in contracted sectors, and data gaps limit effective monitoring.

At the same time, there is a clear opportunity to transform procurement into a driver of inclusive local development. The challenges identified in this diagnostic phase directly inform the objectives, actions, and governance mechanisms proposed in the Integrated Action Plan, ensuring that the strategy is grounded in local realities and responsive to identified needs.

3. Justification of the Integrated Approach

The Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi is based on the conviction that complex social challenges cannot be effectively addressed through isolated or sectoral interventions. Gender inequality, particularly in economic participation and access to opportunities, is a structural phenomenon that intersects with labour markets, business practices, institutional cultures, and public policies. For this reason, the Plan adopts an integrated approach that connects economic governance, equality policy, administrative reform, and stakeholder engagement within a single strategic framework.

Public procurement operates at the intersection of these domains. It is simultaneously a legal-administrative process, an economic transaction, and a political act with social consequences. An integrated approach recognises this multidimensional nature and seeks to align procurement practices with broader municipal objectives, including gender equality, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Rather than treating procurement as a neutral or purely technical

function, the Plan repositions it as an active policy lever capable of generating transformative impact.

The integrated approach of this IAP is reflected in several dimensions. First, it connects policy objectives across departments, ensuring coherence between equality strategies and economic management. Second, it integrates different levels of governance, aligning local action with regional, national, and European frameworks. Third, it combines structural reforms, such as changes to procurement templates and ICT systems, with softer measures, including training, awareness-raising, and stakeholder dialogue. This combination is essential to achieve lasting institutional change.

From a methodological perspective, the integrated approach responds directly to the URBACT framework, which emphasises place-based, participatory, and cross-sectoral solutions to urban challenges. Participation in the GenProcure network has reinforced the importance of avoiding fragmented interventions and instead designing a coherent set of mutually reinforcing actions. The IAP of Alcoi is therefore not a collection of isolated measures, but a structured pathway toward systemic change.

3.1 Rationale for Gender-Responsive Public Procurement

The rationale for adopting a gender-responsive approach to public procurement is grounded in both normative and pragmatic considerations. Normatively, public authorities have a legal and ethical obligation to promote equality between women and men. This obligation extends to all areas of public action, including economic management and public spending. Ignoring the gender dimension of procurement risks perpetuating inequalities and contradicting the stated values and commitments of the municipality.

From a pragmatic standpoint, gender-responsive procurement contributes to better policy outcomes. Evidence from European and international experiences suggests that companies with strong equality policies tend to demonstrate higher levels of organisational quality, employee satisfaction, and long-term sustainability. By incentivizing such practices through procurement, municipalities can improve the quality and resilience of contracted services while supporting progressive business behaviour.

Furthermore, GRPP addresses market failures that disproportionately affect women-led enterprises. Structural barriers, such as limited access to information, networks, and financial resources, reduce the ability of these enterprises to compete on equal terms. Targeted procurement measures can help level the playing field, fostering a more diverse and dynamic local economy.

3.2 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change underpinning the Integrated Action Plan provides a logical and structured explanation of how the proposed actions are expected to lead to the desired outcomes and impacts. It articulates the causal pathways linking inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term change, while explicitly acknowledging assumptions and external factors.

The starting point of the Theory of Change is the recognition that current procurement practices, while legally compliant, do not actively promote gender equality. This results in missed opportunities to influence labour conditions, business practices, and market participation. The IAP assumes that by systematically integrating gender criteria into procurement processes, the municipality can create incentives for change within the local market.

The primary inputs of the Plan include political commitment, technical expertise, financial resources, and participation in the URBACT GenProcure network. These inputs enable the implementation of key activities, such as the development of guidelines, training programs, revision of procurement templates, ICT system updates, and stakeholder engagement initiatives.

These activities are expected to generate concrete outputs, including trained procurement staff, standardised gender-responsive clauses, improved data collection systems, and increased awareness among local businesses. The immediate outcomes of these outputs include greater confidence among officials to apply GRPP, increased participation of women-led enterprises in tenders, and improved working conditions in contracted sectors.

In the medium term, the Plan aims to achieve more substantive outcomes, such as a measurable increase in the proportion of public contracts awarded to companies with strong equality practices, reduced gender gaps in contracted employment, and enhanced institutional capacity to monitor and evaluate gender impacts. These outcomes contribute to the long-term impact of a more inclusive local economy, greater gender equality, and strengthened trust in public institutions.

3.3 Assumptions and External Factors

The Theory of Change is based on several key assumptions. First, it assumes continued political support for equality objectives and responsible procurement practices. Second, it assumes that procurement staff will engage positively with training and capacity-building measures when provided with clear guidance and institutional backing. Third, it assumes that local businesses are willing and able to adapt their practices in response to new procurement requirements, particularly when supported through information and dialogue.

External factors, such as changes in national legislation, economic conditions, or political leadership, may influence the implementation of the Plan. The integrated approach seeks to mitigate these risks by embedding GRPP into standard procedures and securing broad institutional ownership, thereby reducing dependence on individual actors or short-term political cycles.

3.4 Added Value of the Integrated Approach

The added value of the integrated approach lies in its capacity to generate cumulative and mutually reinforcing effects. Training procurement staff without adapting procurement templates would limit impact, just as introducing new clauses without supporting the market would risk exclusion or resistance. By addressing multiple dimensions simultaneously, the Plan maximises its effectiveness and sustainability.

Moreover, the integrated approach enhances policy coherence and administrative efficiency. Clear guidelines, standardised tools, and shared objectives reduce uncertainty and duplication of effort, allowing departments to work more effectively together. This contributes not only to gender equality objectives but also to overall improvements in procurement quality and governance.

In conclusion, the integrated approach and Theory of Change provide a robust conceptual foundation for the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi. They ensure that the proposed actions are logically connected, contextually grounded, and oriented toward measurable and sustainable change. This strategic coherence is essential for achieving the Plan's ambitious objectives and for positioning Alcoi as a reference city in the field of gender-responsive public procurement.

4. Strategic Objectives and Operational Logic

The strategic objectives of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement constitute the backbone of the intervention. They translate the diagnostic findings and the Theory of Change into concrete directions for action, providing clarity, coherence, and measurability. Each objective is designed to address a specific structural challenge while contributing to the overall vision of using public procurement as a driver for gender equality and inclusive local development.

The objectives are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Progress in one area strengthens outcomes in others, reflecting the integrated nature of the Plan. This section provides a detailed explanation of each strategic objective, its rationale, scope, and operational implications.

4.1 Strategic Objective 1: Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Gender-Responsive Public Procurement

Objective:

To enhance the capacity of municipal staff and decision-makers to design, implement, and monitor public procurement processes that systematically integrate a gender perspective.

Rationale:

One of the most significant barriers identified in the local diagnosis is the limited institutional capacity to apply gender-responsive criteria in procurement. While political commitment exists, procurement officials often lack practical knowledge, legal certainty, and standardised tools. This objective addresses the foundational requirement for institutional change: equipping people with the skills, confidence, and support necessary to act.

Scope and Focus:

This objective targets procurement officers, technical staff involved in drafting tender specifications, legal advisors, and political representatives with oversight responsibilities. It recognises that capacity building must go beyond one-off training sessions and instead foster a sustained process of institutional learning.

Operational Logic:

By investing in structured training programs, practical guidelines, and internal support mechanisms, the municipality creates a critical mass of knowledgeable actors capable of main-streaming gender

considerations into everyday procurement practice. This reduces dependence on external expertise and minimises legal and procedural risks.

Expected Results:

- Increased confidence among procurement staff to include gender-related clauses.
- Greater consistency and quality in the application of GRPP across departments.
- Emergence of internal “champions” who promote and support the approach.

4.2 Strategic Objective 2: Systematic Integration of Gender Criteria into Procurement Procedures

Objective:

To embed gender equality considerations as a standard and non-exceptional component of municipal procurement processes.

Rationale:

Isolated or voluntary inclusion of gender clauses is insufficient to generate structural change. To be effective, GRPP must be normalised within procurement practice. This objective addresses the need to move from ad hoc experimentation to institutionalised application.

Scope and Focus:

The objective covers all stages of the procurement cycle, including needs assessment, market consultation, drafting of tender documents, evaluation of bids, contract award, and contract management. It emphasises both mandatory and weighted criteria, ensuring flexibility while maintaining ambition.

Operational Logic:

Standardised templates and clear guidance reduce uncertainty and ensure legal compliance. By defining when and how gender criteria should be applied, the municipality creates a predictable framework for both staff and bidders. This predictability enhances transparency and fairness.

Expected Results:

- Regular inclusion of gender-responsive clauses in tenders.
- Increased alignment between procurement practices and equality policies.
- Reduction of disparities in how different departments apply social criteria.

4.3 Strategic Objective 3: Promoting Inclusive Access and Market Engagement

Objective:

To increase the participation of women-led enterprises and equality-oriented companies in municipal procurement.

Rationale:

Public procurement can unintentionally exclude small and women-led businesses due to administrative complexity and lack of information. This objective seeks to counteract such exclusion by improving access, transparency, and dialogue with the market.

Scope and Focus:

The focus is on local businesses, particularly micro-enterprises and SMEs, as well as social economy organisations. Special attention is given to sectors with high female entrepreneurship and employment.

Operational Logic:

Through targeted communication, capacity-building workshops, and support tools, the municipality lowers entry barriers and builds trust with the business community. Market engagement ensures that procurement requirements are realistic and inclusive, while still ambitious.

Expected Results:

- Increased number of women-led enterprises bidding for public contracts.
- Improved quality and diversity of bids.
- Stronger alignment between market capacity and municipal objectives.

4.4 Strategic Objective 4: Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

Objective:

To establish a robust system for tracking, evaluating, and reporting on the gender impact of public procurement.

Rationale:

Without reliable data and evaluation mechanisms, it is impossible to assess progress or demonstrate impact. This objective responds directly to the data gaps identified in the diagnosis and ensures that GRPP is evidence-based and accountable.

Scope and Focus:

This objective encompasses data collection systems, indicators, reporting processes, and feedback mechanisms. It applies to both internal monitoring and external transparency.

Operational Logic:

By integrating gender-related data into procurement ICT systems and defining clear indicators, the municipality can systematically assess outcomes and adjust strategies as needed. Regular reporting enhances transparency and institutional learning.

Expected Results:

- Availability of sex-disaggregated procurement data.
- Periodic evaluation reports informing decision-making.
- Increased public accountability and trust.

4.5 Cross-Cutting Principles Guiding All Strategic Objectives

All strategic objectives are guided by a set of cross-cutting principles that ensure coherence and quality of implementation:

- **Legality and Proportionality:** All actions respect applicable legal frameworks and ensure proportional application of criteria.
- **Transparency:** Procurement processes remain clear and accessible to all stakeholders.
- **Participation:** Stakeholders are actively engaged in design and implementation.
- **Sustainability:** Actions are designed for long-term institutionalisation.
- **Intersectionality:** Gender is considered alongside other axes of inequality where relevant.

4.6 Coherence Between Objectives and Expected Impact

The strategic objectives collectively contribute to the overarching impact of creating a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient local economy. Institutional capacity enables systematic integration; integration drives market change; market engagement enhances participation; and monitoring ensures accountability. This coherent structure ensures that the Integrated Action Plan functions as a unified and effective strategy rather than a set of disconnected measures.

5. Lines of Action and Detailed Measures

The Lines of Action constitute the operational core of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi. They translate the strategic objectives into concrete, implementable measures, clearly defining what will be done, how, by whom, and for what purpose. Each line of action responds directly to the challenges identified in the diagnostic phase and is designed to generate tangible and measurable change.

The proposed actions are structured to ensure feasibility, legal certainty, and progressive implementation. They combine regulatory adaptation, capacity building, market engagement, and system modernisation, reflecting the integrated approach of the Plan.

5.1 Line of Action 1: Development of a Gender-Responsive Procurement Framework

Category	Details
Purpose	To establish a clear, coherent, and legally sound framework that enables the systematic integration of gender equality considerations into public procurement processes.
Description	This line of action focuses on the creation of standardised tools, guidelines, and reference documents that will support procurement staff in applying gender-responsive criteria confidently and consistently. It recognises that institutional change requires not only political commitment but also practical instruments that translate principles into daily practice.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drafting comprehensive GRPP guidelines tailored to the municipal context of Alcoi, including legal references, practical examples, and decision-making checklists.• Developing sector-specific annexes addressing common procurement areas such as cleaning services, social care, cultural programming, and construction works.• Creating standardised clauses that can be easily incorporated into tender documents, distinguishing between

	<p>mandatory requirements and award criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring alignment between GRPP guidelines and existing municipal policies, including the Municipal Equality Plan and sustainability strategies.
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officially approved GRPP guideline document. • Repository of standardised clauses and templates. • Increased consistency in procurement documentation across departments.

5.2 Line of Action 2: Capacity Building and Continuous Training

Category	Details
Purpose	To ensure that all relevant municipal staff possess the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to implement gender-responsive procurement effectively.
Description	This line of action addresses the human factor of institutional change. Training is conceived not as a one-off intervention but as a continuous learning process adapted to different roles and responsibilities within the organisation.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and delivery of a mandatory training program on GRPP for procurement officers, technical staff, and legal advisors. • Development of modular training content, combining legal foundations, practical case studies, and interactive exercises. • Organisation of refresher sessions and thematic workshops to address emerging challenges and share experiences. • Creation of an internal support network or help-desk for ongoing technical assistance.

Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained cohort of procurement professionals across departments. • Improved understanding of legal and operational aspects of GRPP. • Reduced resistance and increased ownership of the approach.
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5.3 Line of Action 3: Integration of Gender Criteria Across the Procurement Cycle

Category	Details
Purpose	To ensure that gender equality considerations are embedded throughout all stages of the procurement process.
Description	This line of action emphasises the importance of addressing gender not only at the evaluation stage but throughout the entire procurement cycle. This holistic approach maximises impact and coherence.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating gender analysis into needs assessment and contract design phases. • Including gender-responsive award criteria and contract performance conditions. • Defining monitoring requirements related to equality outcomes during contract execution. • Establishing procedures for verifying compliance with gender-related commitments.
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement processes that systematically reflect equality objectives. • Improved quality and social value of awarded contracts. • Enhanced accountability during contract implementation.

5.4 Line of Action 4: Market Engagement and Support for Women-Led Enterprises

Category	Details
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Purpose	To promote inclusive access to public procurement opportunities and support women-led businesses.
Description	Recognising that procurement reform affects market actors, this line of action focuses on dialogue, transparency, and support. It aims to ensure that new requirements do not create unintended barriers but instead foster inclusive participation.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of information sessions and workshops for local businesses on GRPP requirements and opportunities. • Development of guidance materials specifically targeting women-led enterprises and SMEs. • Establishment of a dedicated contact point for procurement-related inquiries. • Promotion of collaborative approaches, such as consortium bidding, where appropriate.
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of procurement opportunities among women entrepreneurs. • Greater diversity of bidders. • Strengthened relationship between the municipality and the local business community.

5.5 Line of Action 5: Digitalisation, Data Collection, and Monitoring Systems

Category	Details
Purpose	To enable evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of gender-responsive procurement practices.
Description	This line of action addresses the technical infrastructure required to support data collection and analysis. It ensures that gender considerations are not only implemented but also measurable.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of procurement ICT systems

	<p>to capture sex-disaggregated data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of dashboards and reporting tools for monitoring indicators. • Training staff in data entry, analysis, and interpretation. • Establishment of protocols for data protection and ethical use.
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable and accessible gender-disaggregated procurement data. • Regular monitoring reports informing decision-making. • Enhanced transparency and accountability.

5.6 Line of Action 6: Communication, Awareness, and Cultural Change

Category	Details
Purpose	To foster a shared understanding of the value and objectives of gender-responsive procurement among internal and external stakeholders.
Description	This line of action recognises that technical measures alone are insufficient without cultural change. Communication and awareness are essential to build support and legitimacy.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communication campaigns highlighting the benefits and successes of GRPP. • Public dissemination of progress reports and good practices. • Engagement with civil society organisations and equality advocates. • Use of inclusive and non-sexist language in all procurement-related communications.
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visibility and acceptance of GRPP. • Greater stakeholder engagement. • Strengthened institutional culture of

5.7 Coherence and Complementarity Between Lines of Action

The six Lines of Action are designed to function as a coherent and complementary system. Legal and procedural reforms are reinforced by capacity building; market engagement supports effective implementation; digital tools enable monitoring; and communication fosters cultural change. Together, they ensure that gender-responsive public procurement becomes an integral and sustainable component of municipal governance.

6. Implementation Plan: Timeline, Roles and Resources

The successful implementation of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi requires a clear and realistic operational framework. This section sets out the implementation logic of the Plan, detailing the temporal sequencing of actions, the allocation of roles and responsibilities, and the mobilisation of resources. It ensures that the strategy moves beyond intention and is translated into concrete, coordinated action.

The implementation plan is designed to balance ambition with feasibility. It adopts a phased approach that allows for progressive learning, adjustment, and consolidation, while ensuring early results that build momentum and institutional confidence.

6.1 Phased Implementation Approach

The implementation of the IAP is structured into four main phases, each with specific objectives and deliverables. This phased approach reflects the complexity of institutional change and the need for gradual integration of new practices.

Phase 1: Preparation and Institutional Alignment

Duration: Months 1–3

Objectives:

- Establish governance and coordination structures.
- Create a shared understanding of the objectives and scope of the Plan.
- Lay the technical and organisational foundations for implementation.

Key Activities:

- Formal constitution of the Project Steering Committee and Interdepartmental Working Group.
- Internal mapping of procurement processes and identification of priority contract types for pilot actions.
- Recruitment of external expertise to support guideline development and training design.
- Launch of an internal communication campaign explaining the purpose and benefits of GRPP.

Expected Results:

- Clear governance structure in place.

- Strong initial institutional alignment.
- Staff awareness and early engagement.

Phase 2: Capacity Building and Pilot Actions

Duration: Months 4–9

Objectives:

- Build institutional capacity through training and tools.
- Test gender-responsive procurement measures in a controlled environment.
- Begin systematic data collection.

Key Activities:

- Delivery of mandatory training programs for procurement and technical staff.
- Finalisation and approval of GRPP guidelines and standardised clauses.
- Launch of pilot procurement procedures incorporating gender criteria.
- Organisation of the first market engagement workshops with local businesses.
- Initial collection of sex-disaggregated data for pilot contracts.

Expected Results:

- Trained and empowered procurement staff.
- Practical testing of GRPP tools.
- Early evidence of feasibility and impact.

Phase 3: Expansion and Institutionalisation

Duration: Months 10–18

Objectives:

- Scale up successful practices across departments.
- Integrate GRPP into standard procurement procedures.
- Strengthen monitoring and reporting systems.

Key Activities:

- Revision and refinement of tools based on pilot feedback.
- Integration of gender clauses into all relevant tender templates.
- Adaptation of procurement ICT systems for comprehensive data collection.
- Continued training and peer-learning sessions.
- Second round of market engagement activities.

Expected Results:

- Systematic application of GRPP across the municipality.
- Improved data availability and quality.

- Increased participation of equality-oriented companies.

Phase 4: Evaluation, Consolidation, and Sustainability

Duration: Months 19–24

Objectives:

- Assess the effectiveness and impact of the Plan.
- Consolidate institutional learning.
- Ensure long-term sustainability.

Key Activities:

- Comprehensive analysis of monitoring data and indicators.
- Preparation of evaluation and impact assessment reports.
- Public dissemination of results and lessons learned.
- Development of a long-term sustainability and scaling strategy.
- Contribution of findings to the URBACT GenProcure network.

Expected Results:

- Evidence-based assessment of outcomes.
- Institutionalisation of GRPP practices.
- Clear roadmap for future development.

6.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation depends on clear allocation of roles and responsibilities. The Plan adopts a shared leadership model that combines political oversight, technical coordination, and cross-departmental collaboration.

Political Leadership

Political leadership provides strategic direction, legitimacy, and visibility. Elected representatives are responsible for endorsing the Plan, ensuring alignment with municipal priorities, and supporting resource allocation.

Project Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for strategic oversight and decision-making. Its main functions include:

- Approving key deliverables and milestones.
- Resolving strategic and interdepartmental issues.
- Monitoring overall progress and risks.

Project Coordination Unit

Located within the Department of Economy and Finance, the Project Coordination Unit manages day-to-day implementation. Its responsibilities include:

- Coordinating activities across departments.
- Managing budgets and external contracts.

- Reporting to the Steering Committee and URBACT structures.

Interdepartmental Working Group

The Working Group brings together technical staff from key departments, including Equality, Legal Services, ICT, Social Services, Urban Planning, and Culture. It serves as a space for operational coordination, problem-solving, and peer learning.

External Stakeholders

External actors, including consultants, trainers, business associations, and civil society organisations., contribute expertise, feedback, and legitimacy. Their involvement ensures relevance and quality.

6.3 Human Resources

The Plan relies primarily on existing municipal staff, complemented by targeted external expertise. Internal staff time is recognised as a strategic investment in institutional capacity. External resources are used selectively to provide specialised knowledge and support innovation.

6.4 Financial Resources and Budgetary Logic

The estimated budget of the Plan reflects its scope and ambition. Resources are allocated across four main categories:

- **Personnel and Internal Coordination:** Covering staff time and coordination activities.
- **External Expertise:** Consultants, trainers, and technical specialists.
- **Digital and Technical Development:** ICT system adaptations and data tools.
- **Communication and Engagement:** Workshops, materials, and dissemination.

Budget flexibility is built in to allow reallocation based on emerging needs and lessons learned.

6.5 Risk Management During Implementation

Risk management is integrated into the implementation plan. Regular monitoring meetings allow early identification of challenges and adaptive responses. Contingency measures include additional training, targeted communication, and phased scaling of actions.

6.6 Implementation Logic Summary

The implementation plan provides a clear roadmap for translating the Integrated Action Plan into action. Its phased structure, defined roles, and resource allocation ensure feasibility, accountability, and adaptability. This operational clarity strengthens the credibility of the Plan and its potential for lasting impact.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Indicators

Monitoring and evaluation are central components of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi. They ensure that the implementation of the Plan is evidence-based, transparent, and oriented toward continuous improvement. This section defines the monitoring framework, indicators, evaluation mechanisms, and reporting processes that will be used to assess progress and impact.

The monitoring and evaluation system is designed not merely as a control mechanism, but as a learning tool that supports adaptive management, accountability, and institutional development.

7.1 Objectives of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system pursues several complementary objectives:

- To track the implementation of planned actions and timelines.
- To measure outputs, outcomes, and impacts related to gender-responsive procurement.
- To identify challenges, risks, and opportunities for improvement.
- To support evidence-based decision-making and strategic adjustments.
- To ensure transparency and accountability toward stakeholders and citizens.

These objectives reflect the integrated and results-oriented nature of the Plan.

7.2 Monitoring Framework

The monitoring framework is structured around three levels:

1. **Process Monitoring:** Focused on the implementation of activities and adherence to timelines.
2. **Output Monitoring:** Focused on immediate results, such as trained staff or revised templates.
3. **Outcome and Impact Monitoring:** Focused on changes in procurement practices, market participation, and gender equality outcomes.

This multi-level approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of progress and results.

7.3 Indicators

A set of quantitative and qualitative indicators has been defined to capture different dimensions of implementation and impact. Indicators are selected based on relevance, feasibility, and alignment with available data sources.

7.3.1 Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators provide measurable evidence of progress and enable trend analysis over time. Key indicators include:

- Number and percentage of procurement procedures that include gender-responsive clauses.
- Total value and proportion of public contracts awarded to women-led enterprises.
- Number of municipal staff trained in gender-responsive public procurement.
- Number of tenders applying weighted gender criteria.
- Number of companies participating in GRPP-related workshops and information sessions.
- Percentage of contracts with monitoring mechanisms related to equality commitments.

These indicators allow the municipality to assess the scale and reach of GRPP implementation.

7.3.2 Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators complement quantitative data by capturing perceptions, experiences, and institutional change. Examples include:

- Perceived confidence of procurement staff in applying gender criteria.

- Feedback from companies on the clarity and fairness of procurement requirements.
- Case studies illustrating improved working conditions in contracted services.
- Assessment of institutional collaboration between departments.
- External perception of Alcoi as a leader in equality-oriented procurement.

Qualitative data will be collected through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and document analysis.

7.4 Data Collection and Management

Data collection responsibilities are clearly assigned to ensure reliability and consistency. Procurement-related data will be collected through adapted ICT systems, while qualitative data will be gathered by the Department of Equality in collaboration with the Project Coordination Unit.

Data management protocols will ensure compliance with data protection regulations and ethical standards. Access to data will be regulated, and aggregated results will be used for reporting and communication.

7.5 Evaluation Process

Evaluation is conceived as a periodic and structured process that goes beyond routine monitoring. Two main evaluation moments are foreseen:

- **Mid-term Evaluation:** Conducted around month 12 to assess progress, identify challenges, and adjust actions if necessary.
- **Final Evaluation:** Conducted at the end of the implementation period to assess outcomes, impact, and sustainability.

Evaluations will combine quantitative analysis, qualitative assessment, and stakeholder feedback. External expertise may be engaged to ensure objectivity and methodological rigour.

7.6 Reporting and Communication of Results

Monitoring and evaluation results will be communicated through regular reports:

- Internal progress reports for the Project Steering Committee (every six months).
- Public summary reports published on the municipal website.
- Contributions to the URBACT GenProcure network, supporting transnational learning.

Clear and accessible communication of results enhances transparency, accountability, and public trust.

7.7 Use of Monitoring Results for Learning and Adaptation

Monitoring results will be actively used to inform decision-making. The Plan adopts an adaptive management approach, allowing actions to be refined based on evidence and experience. This flexibility is essential for addressing emerging challenges and maximising impact.

7.8 Contribution to Knowledge and Policy Development

Beyond local implementation, the monitoring and evaluation system contributes to broader knowledge on gender-responsive public procurement. Lessons learned will inform future policies and support replication and scaling at regional, national, and European levels.

7.9 Summary

The monitoring, evaluation, and indicator framework provides a robust foundation for tracking progress, demonstrating impact, and supporting continuous improvement. It ensures that the Integrated Action Plan remains accountable, effective, and aligned with its strategic objectives.

8. Governance, Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

8.1 Governance Framework

Effective governance is a determining factor in the success of the Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi. The governance model is designed to ensure strategic leadership, operational coordination, accountability, and stakeholder participation throughout the lifecycle of the Plan.

The governance framework combines political oversight with technical management and cross-departmental collaboration. This multi-level structure guarantees both legitimacy and efficiency, while facilitating integration across policy areas.

At the strategic level, political leadership ensures alignment with municipal priorities and provides visibility and institutional backing. At the operational level, technical coordination ensures coherence, continuity, and problem-solving capacity. At the participatory level, stakeholders contribute expertise, feedback, and social legitimacy.

8.2 Decision-Making Structures

The governance model is articulated through the following structures:

- **Project Steering Committee:** Responsible for strategic orientation, approval of milestones, and risk management.
- **Project Coordination Unit:** Responsible for day-to-day management, coordination, and reporting.
- **Interdepartmental Working Group:** Responsible for operational implementation, knowledge exchange, and alignment across departments.

Clear mandates and regular meeting schedules ensure effective communication and timely decision-making.

8.3 Sustainability of the Integrated Action Plan

Sustainability is a core principle of the Plan. From its design phase, actions are conceived to generate lasting institutional change rather than short-term results.

Key sustainability mechanisms include:

- Integration of gender-responsive procurement into standard operating procedures.
- Capacity building that creates internal expertise and reduces dependency on external actors.
- Embedding monitoring systems within existing ICT infrastructure.
- Alignment with long-term municipal strategies and budgetary planning.

By institutionalising GRPP practices, the Plan ensures continuity beyond the formal implementation period.

8.4 Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is ensured through a combination of municipal funding, external program resources, and potential future grants. Over time, the integration of GRPP into routine procurement processes minimises additional costs and maximises return on investment through improved service quality and social outcomes.

8.5 Long-Term Impact

The long-term impact of the Plan extends beyond procurement processes. Expected impacts include:

- Increased economic participation and visibility of women-led enterprises.
- Improved working conditions in sectors contracted by the municipality.
- Strengthened institutional capacity for equality main-streaming.
- Enhanced reputation of Alcoi as a leader in inclusive governance.

These impacts contribute to a more resilient, inclusive, and equitable local economy.

9. Risk Analysis

9.1 Purpose of Risk Analysis

Risk analysis is an integral part of strategic planning. This section identifies potential risks that may affect implementation and defines mitigation strategies to minimise their impact.

9.2 Identified Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk: Limited staff engagement

- *Impact:* Medium
- *Probability:* Medium
- *Mitigation:* Mandatory training, internal communication, recognition of good practices.

Risk: Legal uncertainty or challenges

- *Impact:* Medium
- *Probability:* Low
- *Mitigation:* Early involvement of legal services, use of standardised clauses, legal review of all templates.

Risk: Insufficient market response

- *Impact:* High
- *Probability:* Medium
- *Mitigation:* Market engagement, phased implementation, support to SMEs and women-led enterprises.

Risk: Data quality and availability issues

- *Impact:* Medium

- *Probability*: Medium
- *Mitigation*: Clear data protocols, staff training, ICT system adaptation.

Risk: Political or organisational change

- *Impact*: High
- *Probability*: Low
- *Mitigation*: Institutional approval of the Plan, cross-party support, procedural embedding.

9.3 Adaptive Risk Management

Risk management is conceived as a dynamic process. Risks will be reviewed periodically by the Steering Committee, and mitigation measures will be adjusted based on experience and evolving conditions.

10. Final Conclusions and Added Value of the URBACT Approach

10.1 Final Conclusions

The Integrated Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Alcoi represents a comprehensive and ambitious strategy to leverage public spending as a driver of gender equality and inclusive development. It is grounded in a robust diagnosis, aligned with multilevel policy frameworks, and supported by a clear implementation and governance structure.

By addressing institutional capacity, procedural integration, market engagement, and monitoring, the Plan offers a coherent pathway toward systemic change. It demonstrates that gender equality is not an external or optional consideration, but a core element of effective and responsible public governance.

10.2 Added Value of the URBACT Methodology

Participation in the URBACT GenProcure network has significantly enhanced the quality and relevance of the Plan. The URBACT methodology has provided:

- A structured framework for integrated urban development.
- Opportunities for transnational learning and exchange of good practices.
- Tools for stakeholder participation and co-creation.
- Support for evidence-based and place-based policymaking.

This added value strengthens both the content and the legitimacy of the Integrated Action Plan.

10.3 Transferability and Future Perspectives

The approach developed in Alcoi has strong potential for transferability to other municipalities facing similar challenges. By documenting processes, tools, and lessons learned, the City of Alcoi contributes to broader policy innovation at regional, national, and European levels.

Looking ahead, the Integrated Action Plan lays the foundation for further innovation in socially responsible procurement, including the integration of environmental and intersectional perspectives. It positions Alcoi not only as an implementer of best practices, but as a proactive contributor to the evolution of inclusive public governance.