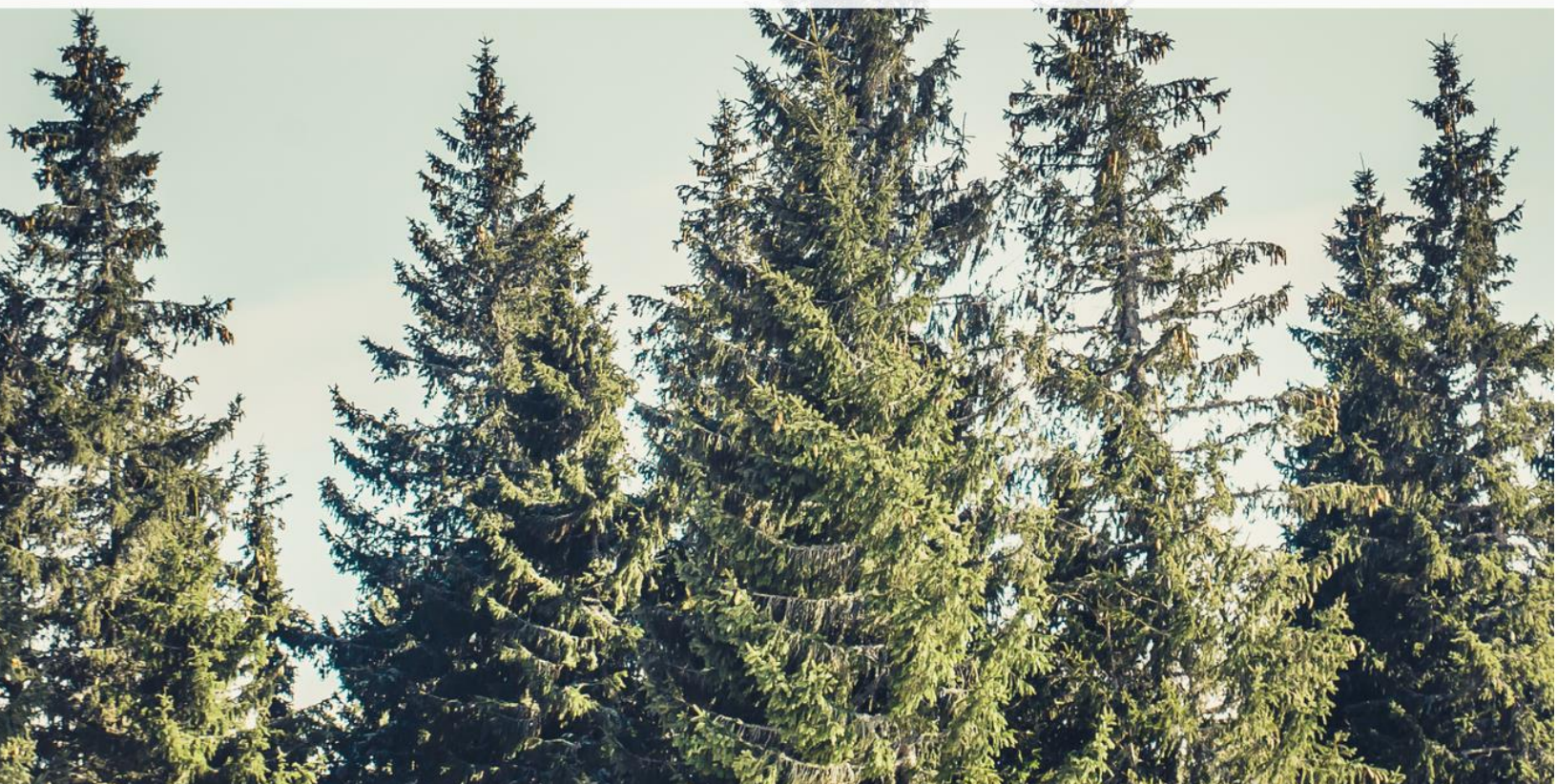


# Progress in Sustainable Public Procurement

Main findings and conclusions from the  
2022 data collection exercise on SDG Indicator 12.7.1



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## Chapter 1. Indicator 12.7.1 and the data reporting process

Considering that governments are often the largest purchasers, representing an estimated 20-30% of GDP,<sup>1</sup> the public sector is a significant market force with the potential to influence product innovation and supplier behavior. This is particularly the case for sectors or products categories where government accounts for the largest market share, such as energy, transport, and infrastructure. Shifting government spending towards more sustainable products and services can send a powerful market signal. It not only encourages the development of more environmentally-friendly products and the adoption of more ethical and responsible business practices, but also begins to build the critical mass necessary for mainstreaming sustainability across industries and supply chains.

The integration of social and environmental considerations in public sector purchasing processes is known as “sustainable public procurement” or “SPP.” It is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to address national sustainable development objectives, as well as global challenges, such as the triple planetary crisis, human and labor rights abuses, and poverty and inequality. The international community has recognized the importance of SPP since the early 1990s, paving the way for its inclusion in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, or ‘[Agenda 2030](#),’<sup>2</sup> adopted by all United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015. Agenda 2030 outlines a global sustainable development framework grounded in 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)<sup>3</sup> and 169 associated Targets, building on the earlier [Millennium Development Goals](#).<sup>4</sup> Sustainable public procurement is addressed under Goal 12 (‘*Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns*’), as Target 12.7, which aims to “*Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities*”.

Following the adoption of Agenda 2030, a global indicator framework was developed to measure and track progress in the achievement of the SDGs. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was designated as custodian of SDG 12 and its 11 related targets.<sup>5</sup> Target 12.7 is measured through Indicator 12.7.1: the ‘*Number of countries implementing Sustainable Public Procurement policies and action plans.*’

This Chapter provides an overview of the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology and a detailed account of the 2022 data collection and review process.



Figure 1. Inclusion of SPP in SDG 12

<sup>1</sup> [www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/sustainable-public-procurement-2022-global-review-parts-i-and-ii](http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/sustainable-public-procurement-2022-global-review-parts-i-and-ii)

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>4</sup> [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

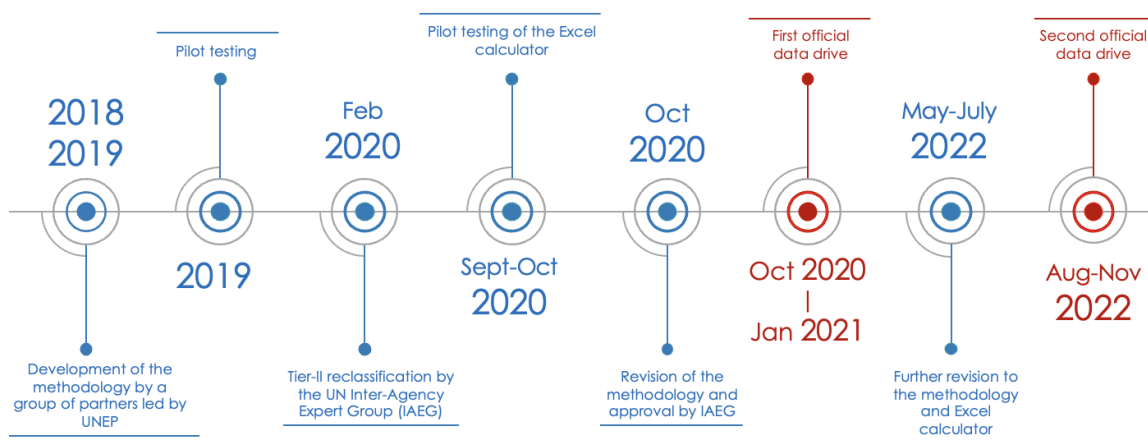
<sup>5</sup> The full list of custodian agencies can be found at <https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite>

## 1.1 Measurement methodology for Indicator 12.7.1

### *Background and current developments*

In order to measure progress towards Target 12.7, the United Nations Environment Programme, in consultation with experts and member organizations of the 10YFP Sustainable Public Procurement Programme of the One Planet Network, developed a methodology for Indicator 12.7.1, which was approved by the UN Inter-Agency Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG) in February 2020. This methodology was operationalized in an Excel-based calculator tool, hereinafter referred to as the “[questionnaire](#).” The questionnaire serves as a practical and standardized means to collect relevant data from participating countries, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of global progress in sustainable public procurement and ultimately in sustainable consumption and production patterns. For a complete timeline of the methodological development of this indicator please see Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Methodological development of Indicator 12.7.1*



Following extensive pilot testing of the questionnaire, the first official data collection exercise on this indicator was launched in 2020. Forty countries - out of 55 that had designated SPP focal points - participated in this exercise, submitting their completed questionnaires for UNEP review and validation.<sup>6</sup> This first exercise provided an opportunity to further refine the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology, ensuring its effectiveness in measuring a country’s level of SPP implementation. Several small changes were made to the methodology and questionnaire in 2022, as outlined in Box 1, reflecting lessons learned from the first data drive, as well as feedback received from national governments via email and survey (see Box 1).

*Box 1: Improvements to the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology and Excel questionnaire in 2022*

<i>Improvements to the methodology</i>	<i>Redesign of the Excel questionnaire</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The scoring system was adjusted from a 1-5 scale to 0-100. However, this did not impact the weight assigned to each response or alter the Excel calculation methodology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The color scheme was changed from blue to green to allow for easy distinction between the 2020 and 2022 versions of the questionnaire.</li> <li>▪ Statements were rewritten as questions, to facilitate understanding of what is being asked.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> Please see the [report](#) on the main results and conclusions from the first reporting exercise.

- Sub-indicator D(c) on “Risk-assessment and impact prioritization” was removed, and the points were evenly distributed among D(a) “environmental criteria” and D(b) “consideration of social, economic and governance-related issues.”
- An additional question (C5) was introduced within sub-indicator C: “Does the national government recognize SPP/GPP best practices and achievements through awards and/or incentives?” Ten points were attributed to this question, removing 10 points from question C4 “Are best practices or case studies (at least 3) shared with procurement practitioners?”
- All questions were highlighted in red font and numbered according to sub-indicator (ie. A1, B1, B2, B3... C1... etc.).
- Point allocation was provided per question.
- Cells were color-coded yellow and pale yellow to facilitate an understanding of what action should be taken in response to the question (ie. yellow indicates selecting a response from a drop-down menu, whereas pale yellow indicates that an answer needs to be typed in).
- Pop-ups were developed to provide guidance on what types of documents can be used to support an answer.
- A separate worksheet was created for responses to sub-indicator A “existence of an SPP policy/action and/or SPP regulatory requirements”.
- An instruction worksheet was added providing general instructions, as well as the link to the methodology, full instructions, as well as the list of SDG indicator 12.7.1 focal points.
- Tabs for the sub-national and cities/municipalities worksheets were removed.

#### *Description of the SDG 12.7.1 methodology*

The SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology provides a comprehensive assessment of a country’s level of SPP implementation *at the national or federal level*.<sup>7</sup> It extends beyond evaluating the legal framework underpinning SPP and includes an assessment of practical support provided to procurement practitioners in SPP implementation, as well as monitoring systems in place to track progress. The evaluation encompasses six parameters, or “sub-indicators” (designated as A through F), which assess the following aspects of SPP:

- (A) SPP policy and/or action plan – Whether an SPP policy, action plan or equivalent legal instrument has been approved by government. This includes overarching policies with comprehensive SPP provisions (ie. such as those that relate to sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production, green economy, circular economy, etc.).
- (B) Public procurement legal framework – Whether the public procurement legal framework includes clear provisions allowing for the integration of sustainability requirements across the procurement cycle, and whether it mandates the procurement of sustainable alternatives for at least certain categories of products or services.
- (C) Tools and support – Whether support and tools are provided to procurement practitioners in the implementation of SPP (ie. SPP guidelines, training, knowledge-sharing and news updates, support through an SPP helpdesk, etc.).
- (D) Sustainability criteria – Whether GPP criteria have been developed and whether social, economic and governance-related focus areas are considered or promoted in procurement practice.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the original aim of the methodology was to create an index that comprehensively assessed SPP implementation across all three levels of government (national, provincial and municipal) based on their share of public procurement, due to the lack of available provincial and municipal data in many countries, the current reporting exercises are focused on evaluating SPP implementation at the national/federal level.



- (E) Monitoring and evaluation – Whether monitoring systems are in place to evaluate progress in SPP implementation and the associated outcomes.
- (F) Outputs/Outcomes – What is the share of sustainable procurement in total procurement value.

The questionnaire used for the assessment of a national or federal government’s level of SPP implementation is composed of 24 questions distributed across the six sub-indicators. By assigning points to each question, the methodology attributes a quantitative value for each response, with a max score of 1 point for sub-indicator A and 20 points each for sub-indicators B through F, as shown in Table 1. A final score is calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Total score} = A \times (B+C+D+E+F)$$

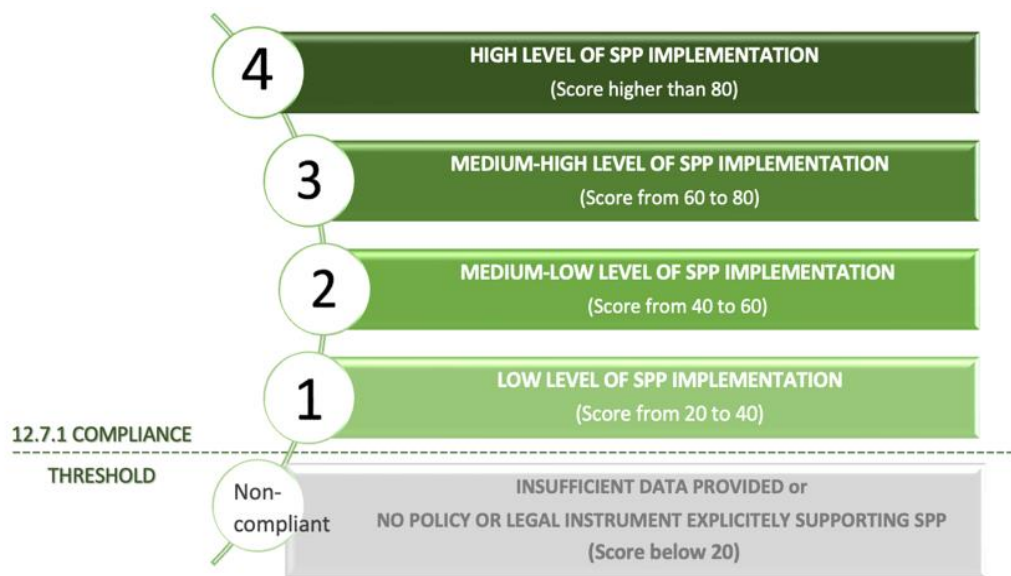
By multiplying the scores for sub-indicators B through F by the score for sub-indicator A, the formula emphasizes the significance of sub-indicator A (*‘existence of an SPP policy and/or action plan’*), while also considering the contributions of other sub-indicators to the overall score.

Table 1. Sub-indicator labeling and scoring

		Parameters/Sub-indicators	Scoring
Legal, regulatory and policy framework supporting SPP	A	Existence of an SPP policy, action plan and/or regulatory requirements	0 or 1
	B	Public procurement regulatory framework conducive to SPP	0 to 20
SPP implementation	C	Provision of practical support to public procurement practitioners in the implementation of SPP	0 to 20
	D	Existence of SPP purchasing criteria/buying standards	0 to 20
SPP monitoring	E	Existence of an SPP monitoring system	0 to 20
	F	Percentage of sustainable purchase of priority products/services	0 to 20

Based on the total score calculated, a national or federal government’s implementation of SPP is categorized according to an SPP maturity model on a scale from 0 to 100. Four classification groups reflect the different stages in advancement in SPP implementation, as shown in Figure 3. This provides a clear framework for understanding the current level of SPP implementation globally and allows for comparison among different countries and regions. The specific threshold above which a country is considered compliant with SDG Indicator 12.7.1 is set at a score equal to or greater than 20 points, indicating that the country has made some initial progress in adopting and implementing SPP practices, demonstrating a commitment to promoting sustainability in its public procurement processes.

Figure 3. SPP maturity model



Only those national or federal governments receiving a score of 20 points or higher (corresponding to maturity levels 1 to 4) are deemed compliant with the methodological requirements of SDG Indicator 12.7.1 and are accounted for in the final measurement of the indicator. Submissions receiving a score below 20 (due to the absence of or insufficient supporting evidence, lack of an SPP policy or equivalent legal instrument, or a very low level of SPP implementation) are therefore not considered in the final measurement of Indicator 12.7.1.

It should be noted that while the questionnaire automatically generates a score based on the responses to each question, the score is only considered official after the completed questionnaire is reviewed and responses are validated by UNEP; points are only granted for responses that are supported by evidence and, when necessary, explanations.

For more detailed information on the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology, please see the [SPP Index Calculation Methodology & Guidelines](#).<sup>8</sup>

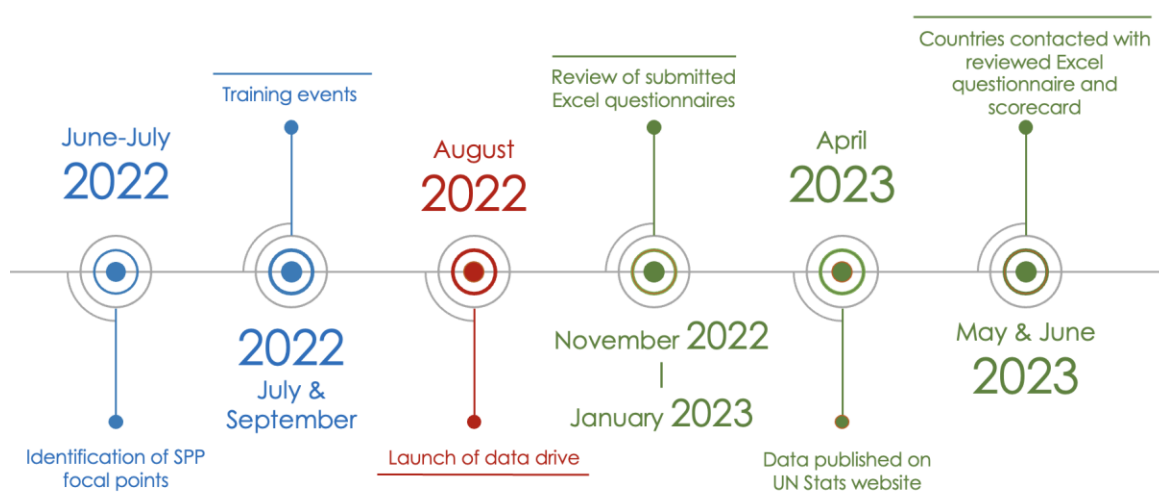
## 1.2 Data collection process (2022)

The 2022 data collection process for SDG Indicator 12.7.1 and subsequent review of submitted questionnaires consisted of a sequence of steps, as outlined in Figure 4. The first step involved the identification of SPP focal points, followed by the updating of tools and delivery of training events on the indicator. Subsequently, the data drive was initiated and the submitted questionnaires were reviewed. The process culminated in the publication of SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data on the UN Statistics Division [Global SDG Indicator Data Platform](#)<sup>9</sup> and outreach to participating national/federal governments with their final results and scorecards. These steps are described in greater detail below.

<sup>8</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/37332>

<sup>9</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

Figure 4. Data collection process and review

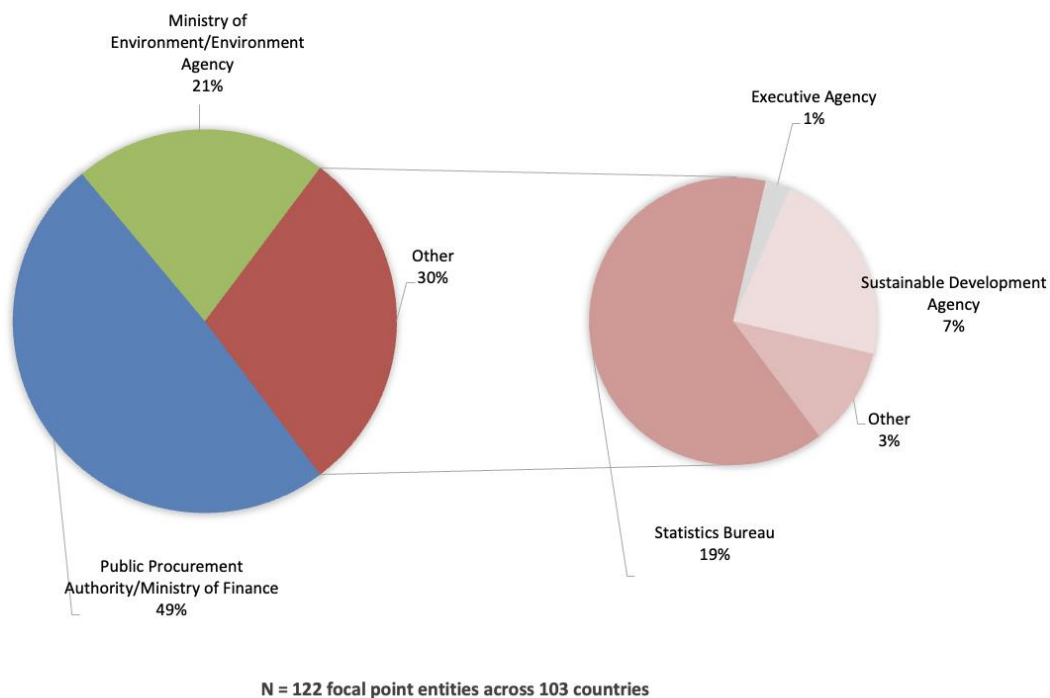


#### Identification of national SPP focal points

In preparation for the official launch of the second SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection exercise, representatives from more than 170 countries (compared to 70 in 2020) were contacted between May and June 2022, to identify relevant public officials, or “SPP focal points,” who would be responsible for the coordination of data collection efforts on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 at the national level. This extensive outreach effort was made possible thanks to support from UNEP’s SDG Data and Information Unit, which provided contact information for SDG focal point(s) in national statistics bureaus around the world. As a result of this process, [103](#)<sup>10</sup> countries designated SPP focal points, a significant increase from the 55 countries in 2020. The majority of these designated focal points were representatives from ministries or agencies charged with environmental or financial affairs, as well as statistics bureaus (see Figure 5).

<sup>10</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14aJq4QnqGnrEBmtWn5UOrN2eH820woc5/view>

Figure 5. Composition of SPP focal point entities - SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection 2022



#### Tools and training on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting

In June and July 2022, the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 [methodology](#)<sup>11</sup> and [questionnaire](#)<sup>12</sup> were revised, and new [guidelines](#)<sup>13</sup> on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting were drafted. Both the questionnaire and guidelines were translated from English into French, Spanish and Arabic.<sup>14</sup> In an effort to facilitate data reporting, country folders were created in Microsoft One Drive for each of the 103 countries that had nominated focal points. These folders included the questionnaire, the accompanying guidelines, and a “supporting documents” folder, where relevant documents could be uploaded by participating countries. For those countries that had participated in the 2020 data drive, their completed Excel questionnaire from 2020 was included among the materials. Countries were given the option to submit their reports via the Microsoft One Drive folder or by email.<sup>15</sup>

To support data collection, six virtual training events were conducted, with two events held in each of the following three languages: [English](#),<sup>16</sup> [French](#),<sup>17</sup> and [Spanish](#).<sup>18</sup> These training sessions focused on data

<sup>11</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/37332>

<sup>12</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/36673>

<sup>13</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/38067>

<sup>14</sup> In 2020, the Excel calculator tool was only available in English, French and Spanish, while the accompanying guidelines were in English only.

<sup>15</sup> In 2020, countries were only given the option of reporting offline, meaning that the Excel questionnaire and guidelines were shared with participating countries as an email attachment, to be completed and returned to UNEP.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TYRS8RsnQs>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUCstfqN\\_rw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUCstfqN_rw)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWu2M8R5dLg>

reporting for SDG Indicator 12.7.1 and took place in July and September. In addition, three virtual “drop-in” sessions were held in October for Q&A. Following the events, [frequently asked questions](#)<sup>19</sup> were compiled and shared with countries in English, French and Spanish, addressing common queries and concerns raised by the participating countries.

#### *Data collection*

The data drive was officially launched the first week of August 2022. Over the course of two weeks, all 103 countries that had nominated SPP focal points were contacted via email, receiving a link to access their respective country folder. The deadline for submitting completed questionnaires was initially set for October 17th, but was later extended until the end of October. By providing a four-month timeframe, UNEP aimed to address one of the key issues that had been raised following the first data collection exercise in 2020, which was the limited time for countries to coordinate and collect data. In total, 67 submissions were received from national or federal governments. These submissions represented an impressive response rate, indicating significant participation and engagement from countries in reporting on their progress toward SDG Target 12.7.

#### *Data review*

Between November 2022 and January 2023, UNEP conducted a thorough review of the 67 submitted reports, carefully verifying data and assessing compliance with the requirements of the sub-indicators. During this review process, UNEP provided notes and comments within the questionnaire, documenting the verification of information or highlighting areas where additional evidence or clarifications were needed. To ensure completeness, the questionnaires were subsequently returned to national SPP focal points with specific requests for any additional supporting evidence and/or clarifications. The majority of national governments (54 out of 67) responded to UNEP’s request, resubmitting their revised questionnaires with the necessary updates and clarifications. In February and March 2023, a final review of the submitted questionnaires was carried out.

Based on the established methodology and maturity levels, a total of 49 reports on SPP implementation were deemed compliant with the methodological requirements (maturity levels 1 to 4) and were considered in the final measurement of the indicator. A list of these 49 national or federal governments, their reporting entity, and level of SPP implementation was submitted to UNEP’s SDG Data and Information Unit. Subsequently, in April 2023, the data was published on the [SDG Global Database](#).<sup>20</sup> In the months that followed, all participating national or federal governments were contacted with their final revised questionnaire, including comments from UNEP, as well as their country scorecard. In addition, countries were invited to participate in a survey to gather feedback on the methodology and data collection process. The feedback obtained through the survey provided valuable input for further improving the methodology and data collection process for the indicator and is summarized in Chapter 4.

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#### *Box 2. Note on data limitations and analysis*

The findings presented in this report, based on data gathered on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 in 2022, are subject to certain limitations. One such limitation is language, as the data collection exercise was conducted in English, Spanish, French and Arabic, which might have resulted in the exclusion of certain countries. Additionally, the questionnaire was completed by 69 national/federal governments, therefore the findings do not reflect all SPP activities

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<sup>19</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12gyZkbnVL4-v1KUW24eRoh5QjWxblu-/view>

<sup>20</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

worldwide. For instance, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and South Africa, all leaders in SPP in their respective regions, did not participate in the reporting exercise.

It is important to also highlight that while UNEP carefully examined each country's completed questionnaire, the final evaluation of data might not strictly reflect the reality of SPP efforts undertaken by national/federal governments, as in some instances supporting evidence was missing and therefore credit could not be granted for a response. Nonetheless, the data obtained from the questionnaires still offers valuable insights and a general overview of the current state of SPP implementation at the national or federal level.

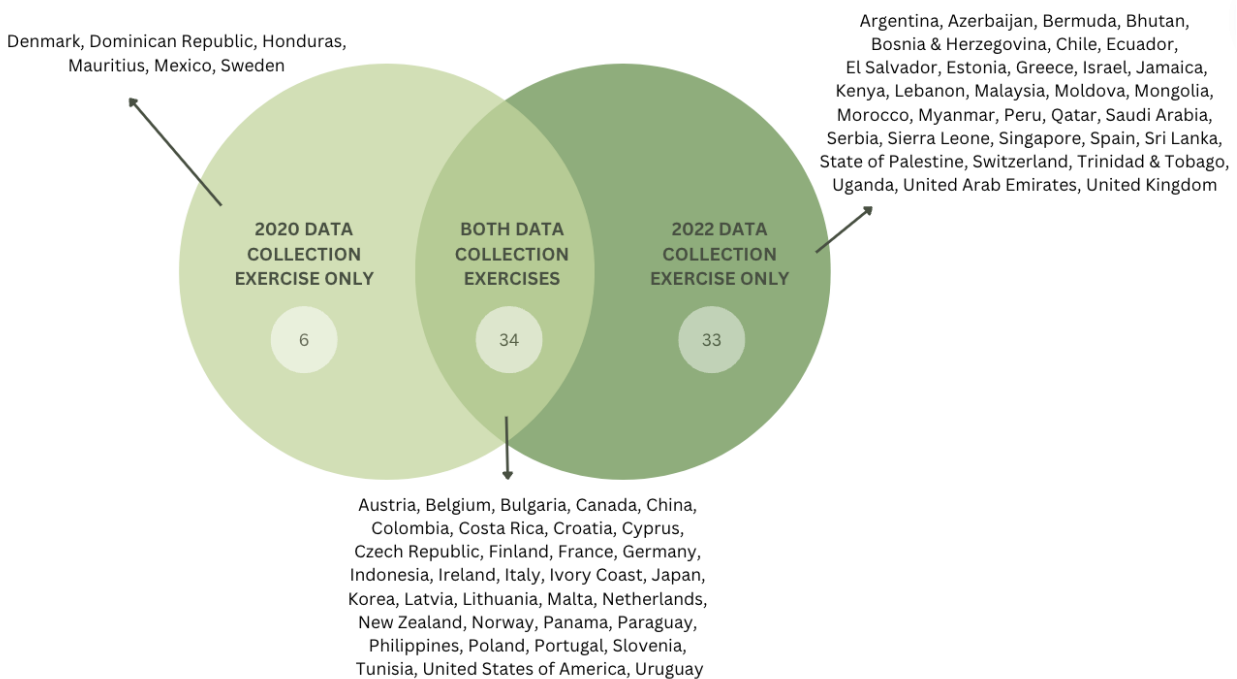
Additionally, the regional analysis presented in Chapter 3, covers 'Northern America,' but it only refers to two countries (USA and Canada) out of the four in the regional grouping. This limited representation can distort regional statistics. For instance, if just one out of the two countries has an SPP policy, the regional charts depict a 50% adoption rate, which may not accurately reflect the overall regional landscape. Furthermore, a comparative analysis across reporting years is not possible for Africa and Western Asia as only one country (the Ivory Coast) out of 75 countries in the region took part in the 2020 data drive, and therefore this part of the world was not represented in the regional charts for 2020, making it challenging to assess changes and trends in SPP implementation in the region over time.

Lastly, it's important to consider that findings may not always be directly comparable between reporting years due to variations in the countries that participated in the data collection exercises. The inclusion of different countries in each round of data collection could influence the overall results and affect direct comparisons between the two reporting periods.

## Chapter 2: Outcome of report evaluation

In total, 67 national and federal governments responded to the second call to report on SDG Indicator 12.7.1, providing comprehensive accounts of their SPP policies, implementation activities and monitoring efforts (Figure 6). This marks a 67 percent increase over the number of countries that participated in data reporting in 2020 (40 countries), which can be attributed to the broader outreach efforts described in Chapter 2.3. Notably, almost all the national and federal governments that reported on this indicator in 2020 continued their participation in the data collection efforts in 2022 (34 out of 40).<sup>21</sup> Additionally, 33 countries participated in the reporting exercise for the first time, contributing to a more extensive and diverse dataset for the assessment of SPP implementation globally.

Figure 6. Number of participating national/federal governments in the 2020 and 2022 data collection exercises



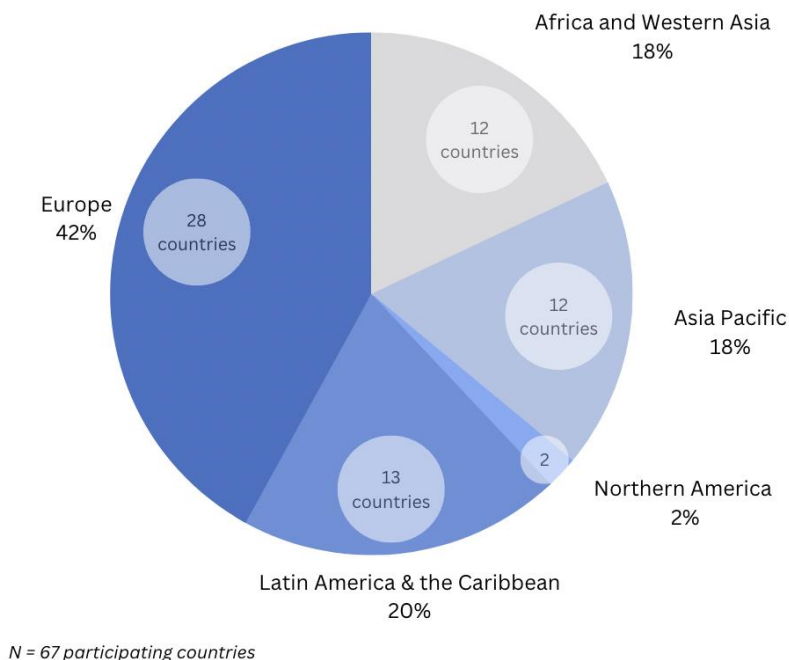
This Chapter provides an overview of the geographical representation of the 67 participating national and federal governments, the types of reporting entities, and the general outcomes of the data drive in terms of country classification according to the SPP maturity model. The data presented here offers insights into the global distribution of SPP implementation efforts and the progress made by various countries in advancing sustainable procurement practices.

<sup>21</sup> The reasons why some countries that initially participated in the first data collection exercise did not participate in the second include the following: they had no new developments to report, faced challenges in identifying a new SPP focal point, experienced changes in government, etc.

## 2.1 Participating countries and survey statistics

Participants in the 2022 data drive on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 represented a diverse array of countries<sup>22</sup> covering all regions of the world, as shown in Figure 7. Europe accounted for the greatest number of participating countries (28), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (13), the Asia Pacific (12), and Africa and West Asia (12) regions.

Figure 7. Regional distribution of participating countries in SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection (2022)



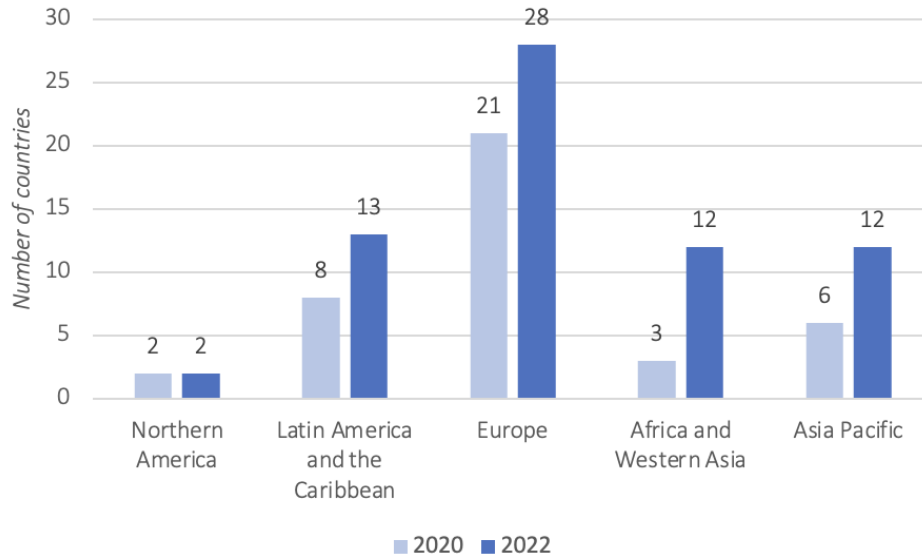
The global coverage of participation in the data collection effort in 2022 was much greater than 2020. With the exception of Northern America, all regions noted increases in participation in SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting (Figure 8). These increases are particularly apparent in the Africa and Western Asia region (from 3 countries in 2020 to 12 countries in 2022, or a 400% increase), followed by the Asia Pacific (from 6 to 12, or a 100% increase). Still some notable gaps remain in 12.7.1 reporting. For instance, seven countries<sup>23</sup> out of the G20 did not participate in the 2022 reporting exercise, among these some, such as Brazil and South Africa, are known to run active SPP programmes and are SPP leaders in their respective regions. Addressing such gaps in the future will be essential to ensure a more comprehensive representation of SPP efforts worldwide.

<sup>22</sup> The geographical areas (including country names) mentioned in the figures and subsequent text exclusively pertain to the national or federal governments that participated in the data collection exercise for SDG Indicator 12.7.1 during the years 2020 and 2022.

<sup>23</sup> These countries are Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and South Africa. It should be noted that Mexico participated in data reporting in 2020.

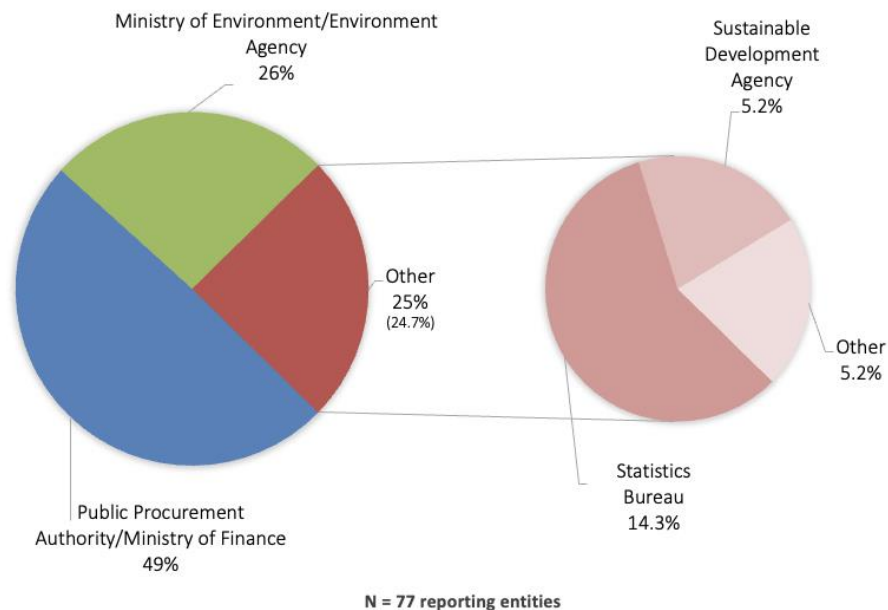


Figure 8. Regional distribution of participating countries in SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection 2020 and 2022



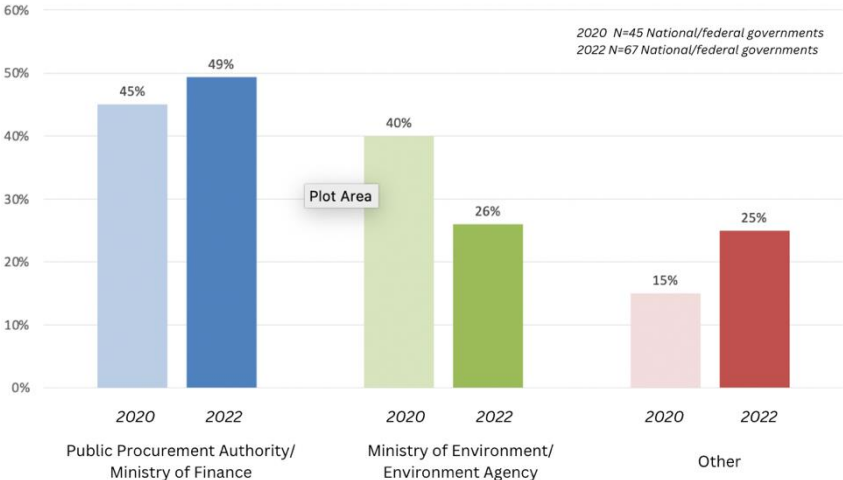
Designated SPP focal points, responsible for completing the questionnaire and coordinating information collection across government, represented various public entities. The majority were from public authorities charged with either financial or economic responsibilities (49%), while 26% were from entities responsible for environmental affairs. The remaining 25% belonged to other types of entities, with statistics bureaus the most prevalent, followed by public entities responsible for sustainable development, etc. (Figure 9). It should be noted that some countries designated multiple focal points from more than one reporting entity, which indicates that SPP efforts are spread across government. This reflects the cross-cutting and collaborative nature of SPP implementation, involving multiple stakeholders and departments.

Figure 9. Composition of reporting entities - SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection (2022)



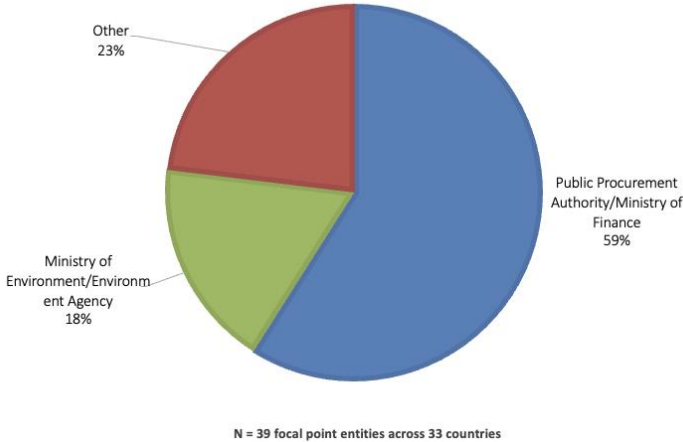
When comparing these results to data from the 2020 reporting exercise, a notable change is observed in the representation of SPP focal points from public authorities charged with environmental affairs. The percentage of such entities has decreased significantly, dropping from 40% in 2020 to 26% in 2022 (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Composition of reporting entities - SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection 2020 and 2022



This notable drop can be attributed to the inclusion of new reporting entities from first-time reporting countries. It's important to highlight that the designated reporting entities from the 34 countries that participated in both data collection exercises remained the same across both years (2020 and 2022). The increase in the number of reporting entities from first-time reporting countries belonging to the categories of 'Public Procurement Authority/Ministry of Finance' and 'other' is evident from Figure 11. The increased role of Public Procurement Authorities/Ministries of Finance probably reflects the growing importance of sustainable procurement, indicating that SPP has become integrated and mainstreamed across policies supporting the transition to a green economy.

Figure 11. Composition of new reporting entities - SDG Indicator 12.7.1 data collection 2022



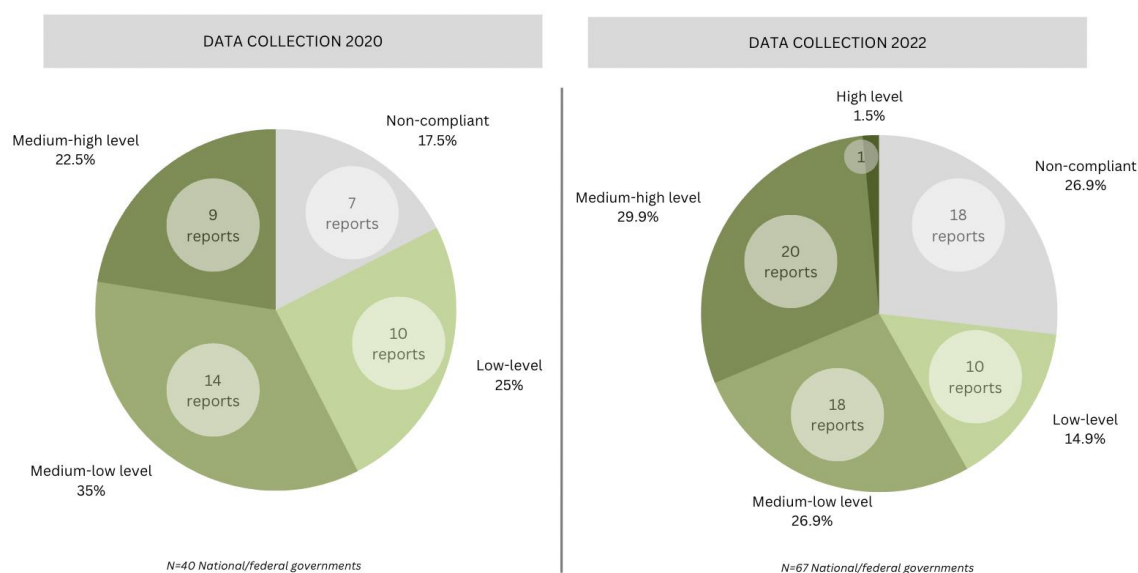
## 2.2 Classification of countries according to the SPP maturity model

Based on the evaluation framework and maturity levels detailed in Chapter 1, 49 of the 67 submitted reports (or 73%) were deemed “compliant” with SDG Indicator 12.7.1, compared to 33 out of 40 (82.5%) in 2020. Compliance means that a country scores 20 points or higher (out of 100) and can be included in the measurement of SDG Indicator 12.7.1 (*the number of countries implementing SPP policies and action plans*). The remaining 18 reports (27%) did not meet the methodological requirements to be considered “compliant,” either due to the absence of an SPP policy or equivalent legal instrument, insufficient implementation of SPP, or to the lack of supporting evidence for a proper appraisal. It is worth highlighting that the majority of these non-compliant reports (16 out of 18) were submitted by countries reporting on this indicator for the first time, suggesting a lower level of familiarity with the data collection process. The increased proportion of non-compliant countries (from 17.5% in 2020 to 26.9% in 2022) can be attributed to the significant number of first-time reporting countries (33 out of 67) in the 2022 data collection exercise.

In terms of the classification of the 49 compliant reports, they were distributed as follows: 10 were assessed as belonging to Level 1: low level of SPP implementation (14.9% compared to 25% in 2020); 18 reports fell into Level 2: medium-low (26.9% compared to 35% in 2020); and 20 were classified as Level 3: medium-high (29.9% compared to 22.5% in 2020). This distribution is illustrated in Figure 12. Only one report met the requirements for the fourth category, corresponding to a high level of SPP implementation. In the 2020 data collection exercise no report achieved this level. The decreased proportion of reports classified as “Level 1 and 2” correlates with an increased proportion of reports classified as “Level 3,” pointing to progress in SPP implementation.

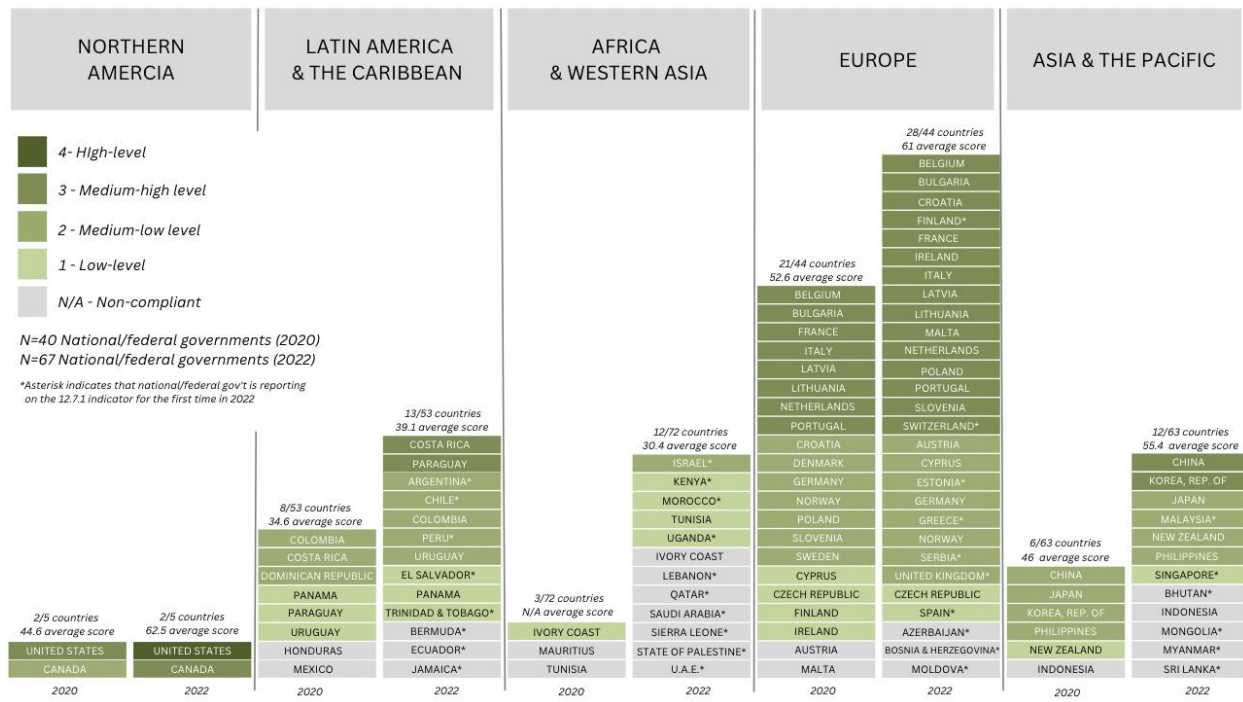
The mean score, which stands at 53.33, for the 49 reports considered ‘compliant’ with the indicator signifies that on average countries have achieved a Level 2 SPP maturity, indicating a medium-low level of SPP implementation. This is a 10-point increase over the average recorded in 2020 (39.4), indicative of a low-level of maturity (Level 1).

Figure 12. Number of reports classified per maturity level 2020 and 2022



Mean scores varied significantly across regions, as shown in Figure 13. Northern America, Europe and the Asia Pacific performed the strongest, with mean scores of 62.5, 61 and 55.4 respectively, corresponding to maturity Level 2 (medium-low). On the other hand, mean scores for Latin America and the Caribbean (39.1) and Africa and Western Asia (30.4) reflected maturity Level 1 (low). While all regions showed an improvement in their means scores, Africa and Western Asia demonstrated the most significant progress, with an average increase of one maturity level (23.6 points), followed by Northern America (0.9 levels or 17.9 points), and Latin America and the Caribbean (0.8 levels or 16.72 points), Europe (0.8 levels or 15.4 points), and Asia Pacific (0.6 levels on average or 11.2 points).

Figure 13. Classification of reports based on performance and region 2020 and 2022



At a country level, the majority of national/federal governments that participated in the 2020 data collection exercise exhibited progress in SPP implementation. Three countries that were previously deemed non-compliant in 2020 have improved their performance and are now counted towards the indicator. Specifically, Tunisia advanced to Level 1: low-level of SPP implementation, while Austria and Malta are now at a Level 3: medium-high. The notable rise in levels for Austria and Malta can be attributed in part to an improvement in the quality of their reporting.

In total, out of the 33 countries that were considered compliant with the indicator in 2020, 17 countries<sup>24</sup> have seen improved performance, with an average increase of 28.2 points or 1.41 levels. Twelve of these 17 countries (Canada, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Tunisia, United States of America, and Uruguay) have improved their performance by 1 level,

<sup>24</sup> These are: Austria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, the Republic of Korea, Malta, New Zealand, Paraguay, Poland, Slovenia, Tunisia, United States of America, and Uruguay.

while Finland, Ireland, and Paraguay have shown significant progress, with an impressive increase of two levels.

### 2.3 General observations

Increased participation and performance in SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting underscores both a growing commitment to sustainable public procurement, as well as progress in the adoption of policies, regulations and practical measures supporting SPP practices. Considering the classification of the reports and the geographical distribution of the 49 countries meeting the methodological requirements of SDG Indicator 12.7.1, some general observations can be drawn.

The continued high representation of European national governments (25 countries) among the compliant respondents (or 51%), reflects the European Union's (EU) longstanding commitment to SPP. The majority of EU member states have established public procurement legal frameworks that foster favorable conditions for SPP implementation, given the transposition of the [EU public procurement directive](#)<sup>25</sup> at the national level. Nevertheless, it's important to highlight that among these countries there are varying degrees of SPP maturity. This variability indicates the diverse levels of advancement in the establishment of supportive measures, including tools and training, to enhance effective SPP implementation. Still, substantial progress in SPP implementation has been observed in the region, with 8 out of the 21 countries that participated in data reporting in 2020 moving up one or more levels in the maturity model.

Strong performance was also observed in Northern America, where both Canada and the United States, advanced into Level 3 and 4 of SPP maturity. This reflects the issuance of recent policies and legal instruments supporting sustainable public procurement. For example, the [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#) (2021) has enabled the inclusion of environmental and social considerations in specifications in Canada, whereas previously such legal requirements were absent.<sup>26</sup> While in the United States, Joe Biden's administration has issued policies dedicated to promoting SPP, such as [Executive Order 14057](#)<sup>27</sup> on "Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability" (2021). This executive order, along with the accompanying [Implementing Instructions](#)<sup>28</sup> (2022), places a significant emphasis on public procurement as a key driver in achieving net-zero emissions, aligning with the sustainability objectives outlined in the [Federal Sustainability Plan](#)<sup>29</sup> 2021 and [Inflation Reduction Act](#)<sup>30</sup> (2022).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there was a noteworthy level of participation and performance in 12.7.1 reporting, with six new countries contributing to the reporting efforts. Paraguay, among the region's leaders in SPP, has recently undertaken steps towards implementing its SPP policy and [action plan](#) (2020),<sup>31</sup> with the establishment of an Institutional Committee for Sustainable Public Procurement in 2021 tasked with overseeing the process of SPP implementation and monitoring. Other countries, such as Panama (2020), have recently developed SPP policies and action plans, whereas El Salvador is in the drafting process.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014L0024>

<sup>26</sup> More recently, in 2023, the [Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff](#).

<sup>27</sup> [www.fedcenter.gov/programs/eo14057](http://www.fedcenter.gov/programs/eo14057)

<sup>28</sup> [www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/EO\\_14057\\_Implementing\\_Instructions.pdf](http://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/EO_14057_Implementing_Instructions.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> [www.sustainability.gov/federalsustainabilityplan](http://www.sustainability.gov/federalsustainabilityplan)

<sup>30</sup> [www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/inflation-reduction-act-guidebook](http://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/inflation-reduction-act-guidebook)

<sup>31</sup> [www.contrataciones.gov.py/dncp/compras-publicas-sostenibles/plan-de-accion-compras-publicas-sostenibles](http://www.contrataciones.gov.py/dncp/compras-publicas-sostenibles/plan-de-accion-compras-publicas-sostenibles)

The Caribbean sub-region has also emerged, with participation from Bermuda, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago in 2022 reporting, reflecting increased interest and action in the area of SPP. Trinidad and Tobago, for example, has undertaken a recent overhaul of its public procurement system, marked by the release of the [Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act](#)<sup>32</sup> (2015) [regulations](#)<sup>33</sup> and [guidelines](#)<sup>34</sup> in 2021 and 2022 respectively. Among the objectives of the Act is to promote “local industry development, sustainable procurement and sustainable development.”<sup>35</sup>

Participation in 12.7.1 reporting nearly doubled in the Asia-Pacific region, where GPP pioneers such as the Republic of Korea and China continue to scale up their efforts in SPP implementation and measurement, and are joined by other countries, such as Malaysia and the Philippines, which have taken significant strides in SPP implementation over recent years. Impressively, in 2021, the Republic of Korea issued its [4<sup>th</sup> Action Plan for Promoting the Purchase of Green Products](#)<sup>36</sup> (2021-2025).

Africa and Western Asia has also emerged as a region reporting on progress in SPP implementation, with notable efforts in Kenya and Uganda. In 2022, Uganda issued its first [SPP action plan](#)<sup>37</sup> (2022-2026), while Kenya released [standard tender documents](#), which allow for the inclusion of sustainability considerations.

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<sup>32</sup> [www.finance.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Public-Procurement-and-Disposal-of-Public-Property-Act-2015.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Public-Procurement-and-Disposal-of-Public-Property-Act-2015.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> <https://oprtd.org/legislative-framework>

<sup>34</sup> <https://oprtd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Sustainable-Development-Sustainable-Procurement-pdf.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Page 10 (Article 5) of the [Public Procurement and Disposal Act](#).

<sup>36</sup> [www.me.go.kr/home/web/policy\\_data/read.do?menuId=10260&seq=7635](http://www.me.go.kr/home/web/policy_data/read.do?menuId=10260&seq=7635)

<sup>37</sup> [www.finance.go.ug/publication/national-sustainable-public-procurement-spp-action-plan-fy-2022-%E2%80%93-2026](http://www.finance.go.ug/publication/national-sustainable-public-procurement-spp-action-plan-fy-2022-%E2%80%93-2026)

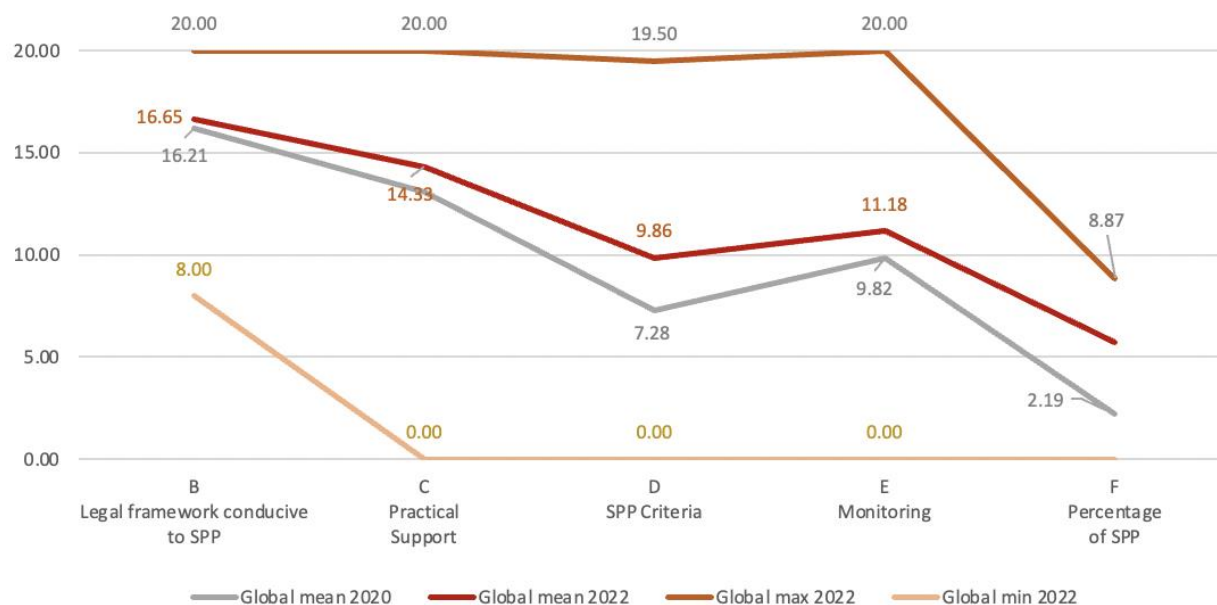
### Chapter 3: Global state of sustainable public procurement

This Chapter presents a summary of the 2022 data drive results for SDG Indicator 12.7.1, offering insights into the current state of sustainable public procurement at both the global and regional levels, while also highlighting changes and progress between reporting years (2022 and 2020). The analysis is focused on the 49 compliant countries and covers all six sub-indicators (A-F) and questions in the reporting exercise.

As detailed in Chapter 1, the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology evaluates a country’s level of SPP implementation using the formula  $A \times (B+C+D+E+F)$ . The maximum score a country can achieve is 100, with 1 point attributed to sub-indicator A and 20 points allocated to each of the remaining sub-indicators. All 49 compliant countries showed evidence of an approved SPP policy / action plan and/or equivalent SPP regulatory requirements and therefore received full credit (1 point) for sub-indicator A. Figure 14 below provides a snapshot of overall global performance across sub-indicators B through F.

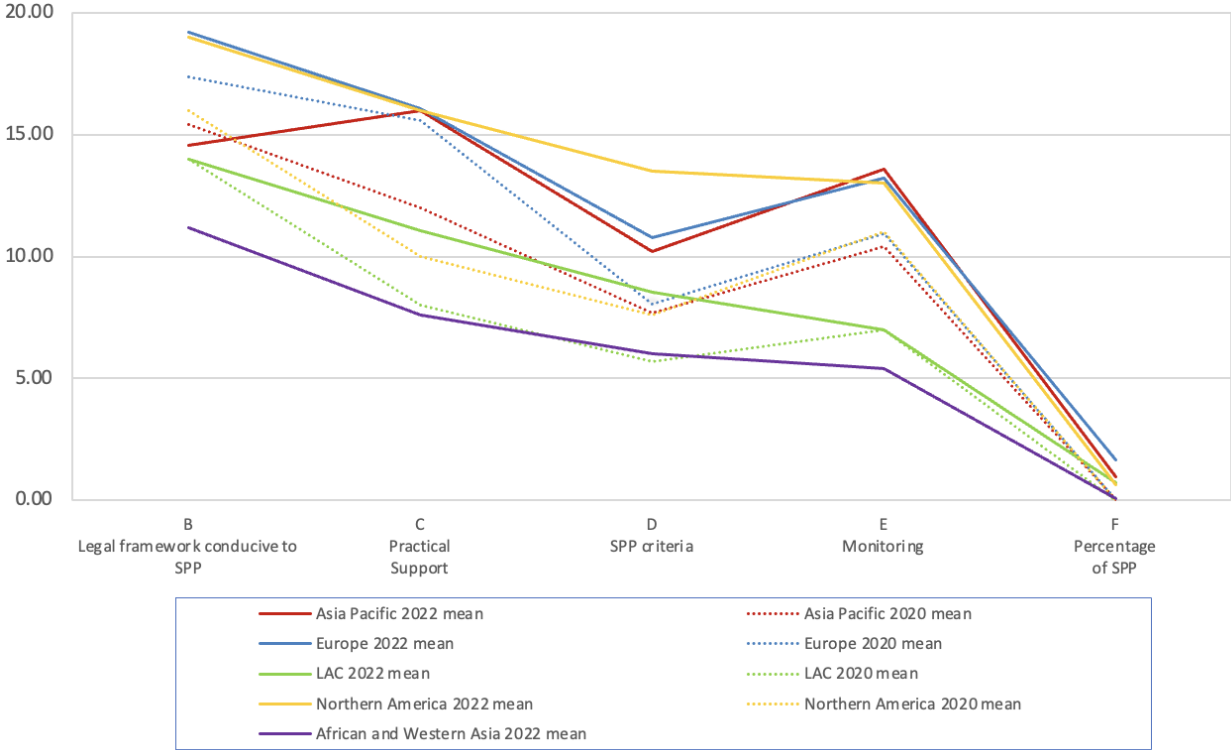
Findings at the global level show that countries perform well in SPP policy development (sub-indicators A and B), indicating a strong foundation for SPP practices. However, there is room for improvement in measures to support SPP implementation (C and D) and monitoring (E and F), as these areas show comparatively weaker performance. These results are not surprising as SPP policy development paves the way for implementation, which in turn generates data for monitoring progress. While the 2022 trend line mirrors results from 2020, some progress has been noted in sub-indicator D ‘Development of SPP criteria’ (with a global mean indicator score of 9.86 in 2022 compared to 7.28 in 2020) and sub-indicator E ‘Monitoring’ (with a global mean indicator score of 11.18 in 2022 compared to 9.82 in 2020). Still, as in 2020, few countries were able to report on the results of their monitoring efforts (sub-indicator F), and among those that did, the proportion of sustainable procurement in their overall procurement is low. This indicates that there is still work to be done in enhancing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of SPP implementation.

Figure 14. Overall global performance per indicator 2020 and 2022



A regional comparison of performance across these five sub-indicators shows considerable variation, but the overall pattern remains consistent with the global trend noted earlier (Figure 15). Europe stands out with the highest mean scores across almost all sub-indicators, reflecting the European Union’s longstanding efforts in SPP policy implementation. Northern America and the Asia Pacific also exhibited robust overall performance. It is important to note that all regions have made progress in their overall performance across most sub-indicators, with the exception of F. The Asia Pacific region stands out for making significant strides in SPP monitoring, while Latin America and the Caribbean has shown progress in providing practical support to procurement practitioners and developing SPP criteria.

Figure 15. Overall regional performance 2020 and. 2022



A more detailed analysis of global and regional data for each sub-indicator and question is presented in the sections that follow, providing a deeper understanding of the strengths and challenges faced by countries in their efforts to adopt SPP policies, regulations and practical measures in support of implementation and monitoring.



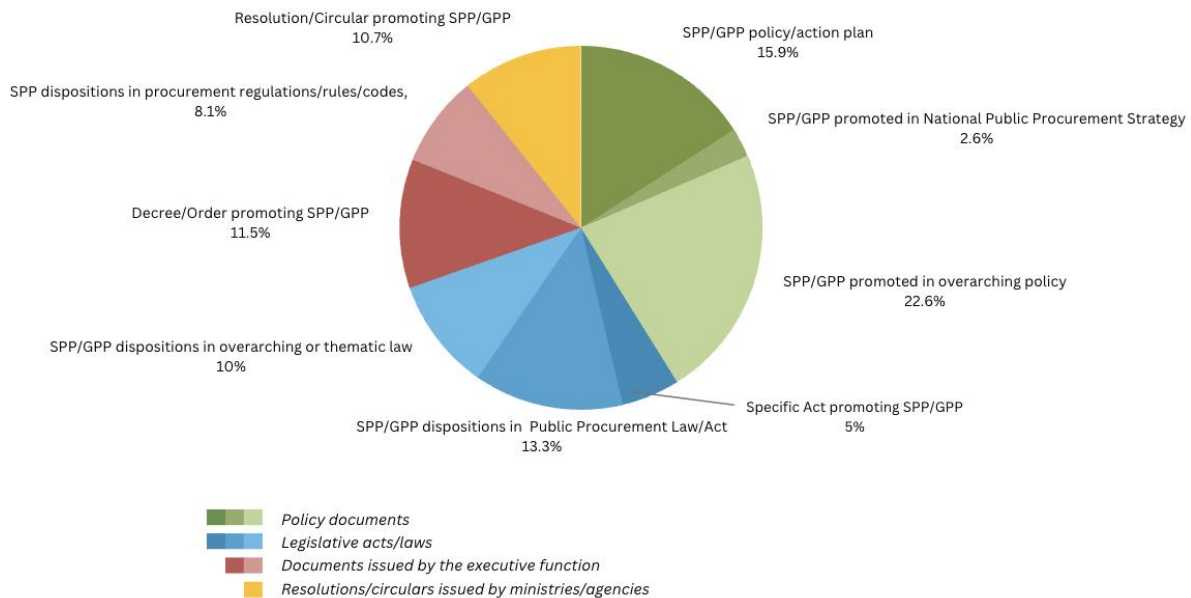
### 3.1 Sub-indicator A: Existence of an SPP policy or action plan

A solid sustainable public procurement policy framework provides the political mandate and guidance to incorporate sustainability considerations into purchasing decisions. It is therefore a fundamental starting point in the journey towards SPP implementation and is the focus of the first part of the questionnaire. Sub-indicator A evaluates whether a country has an approved SPP policy/action plan and/or equivalent SPP regulatory requirements. Participants were asked to provide evidence of any of the following:

- (1) Dedicated SPP policies/strategies, action plans/road maps;
- (2) Overarching policies (ie., policies/strategies on sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production, green economy, circular economy, etc.) with comprehensive SPP provisions;
- (3) Sectoral laws with comprehensive SPP provisions (ie., Directives on Energy Efficiency); and/or
- (4) Public procurement laws and regulations with comprehensive SPP provisions.

All 49 countries in compliance with SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reported having at least one approved policy or legal document supporting SPP implementation, and an impressive 96% (47) indicated having two or more. Notably, some countries, such as Germany, Ireland, Portugal and the United States, reported more than 10 policies and legal instruments supporting SPP. In total, 270 policies and legal instruments were reported across all compliant countries. Figure 16 illustrates the diversity in the types of policies and legal instruments supporting sustainable public procurement among the 49 compliant countries. The majority (63% or 31 countries) had approved SPP policies and/or action plans, however more commonly SPP was promoted through overarching policies.

Figure 16. Types of policy documents and legal instruments supporting SPP



N = 270 submitted policy documents and legal instruments among the 49 compliant countries  
 \*Note: Some variance may be observed between the data collected in 2022 verses 2020, as in 2022 participating countries were asked to list all of their policies and legal instruments supporting SPP/GPP, whereas in the previous exercise this was not required.

### 3.2 Sub-indicator B: Public procurement legal and regulatory framework

Sub-indicator B, organized according to two sections (Ba and Bb), assesses to what degree a country's legal framework facilitates SPP implementation. B(a) looks at whether public procurement laws allow for the inclusion of sustainability considerations across various stages of the procurement cycle and Bb evaluates whether the procurement of sustainable alternatives is mandated for at least certain types of products or services.

#### *B(a) Sustainability considerations at different stages of the procurement cycle*

In section B(a), participants were asked if their public procurement laws include specific provisions or clauses that allow for the integration of the following sustainability considerations, numbered B1 – B7, across the four stages of the procurement cycle:

##### (1) Requirement definitions

- B1. Inclusion of sustainability requirements in technical specifications.
- B2. Inclusion of functional or 'performance-based requirements' in technical specifications.

##### (2) Pre-qualification/qualification

- B3. Prequalification/qualification of suppliers based on their commitments to and/or compliance with environmental or social sustainability objectives/requirements.
- B4. Exclusion of suppliers in breach of environmental or social laws.

##### (3) Evaluation

- B5. Award of contract based on criteria other than price.
- B6. Use of life-cycle costing in the evaluation of bids.

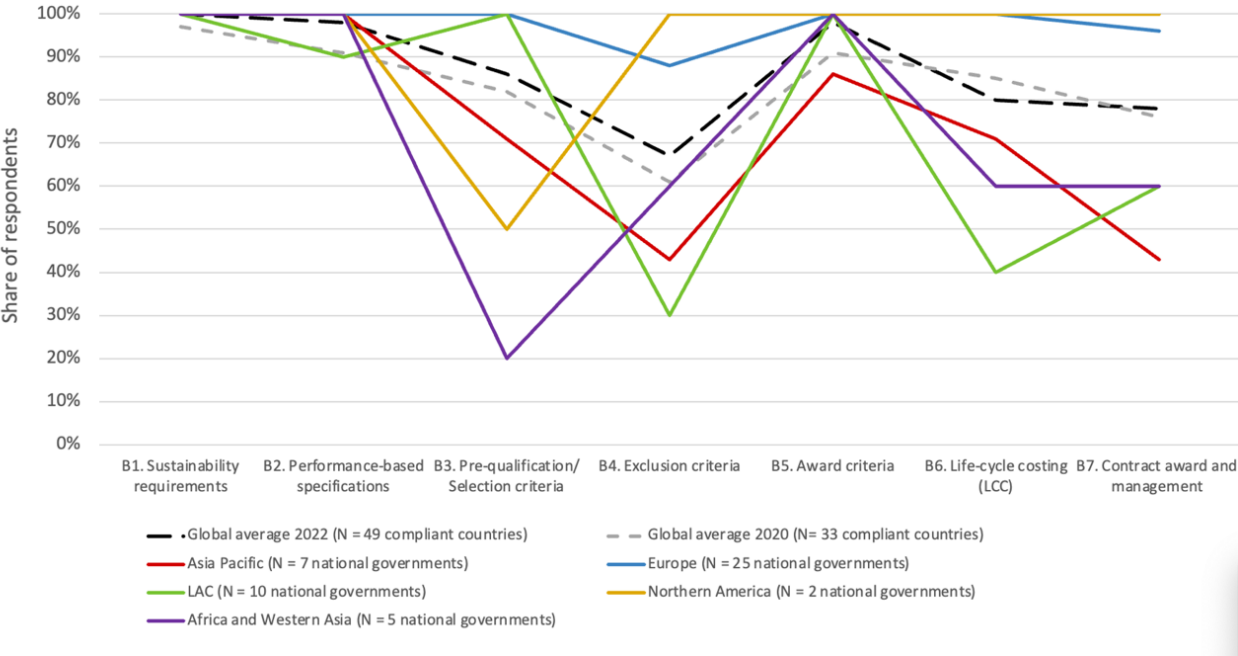
##### (4) Contract award and management

- B7. Inclusion of sustainability requirements in contract performance clauses.

It is important to note that Ba focuses on whether such considerations were *allowed* and not whether they were effectively *applied* in day-to-day practice. Furthermore, legal documents needed to explicitly reference these sustainability provisions, rather than having them implied or left to interpretation.

Figure 17 provides an overview of global and regional responses to the possibility of including sustainability requirements across the four specified stages of the procurement cycle. Consistent with global findings from 2020, the legal frameworks of countries compliant with SDG Indicator 12.7.1 most commonly allow for the integration of sustainability considerations in the ‘requirement definitions’ and ‘evaluation and selection’ stages of the procurement cycle. It is less common for them to allow the application of sustainability criteria in the ‘pre-qualification/qualification’ stage and ‘contract award and management’ stage, particularly with reference to the integration of sustainability requirements in ‘exclusion criteria’ and the use of ‘life cycle costing’ in contract award. Some regions, however, exhibited different patterns. For instance, in Latin America and the Caribbean the legal framework of most countries allows for the application of sustainability criteria in the pre-qualification/qualification stage, while in Europe the integration of sustainability considerations is permitted across almost all stages of the procurement cycle.

Figure 17. Stages of the procurement cycle where the inclusion of sustainability requirements is explicitly allowed by the legal framework

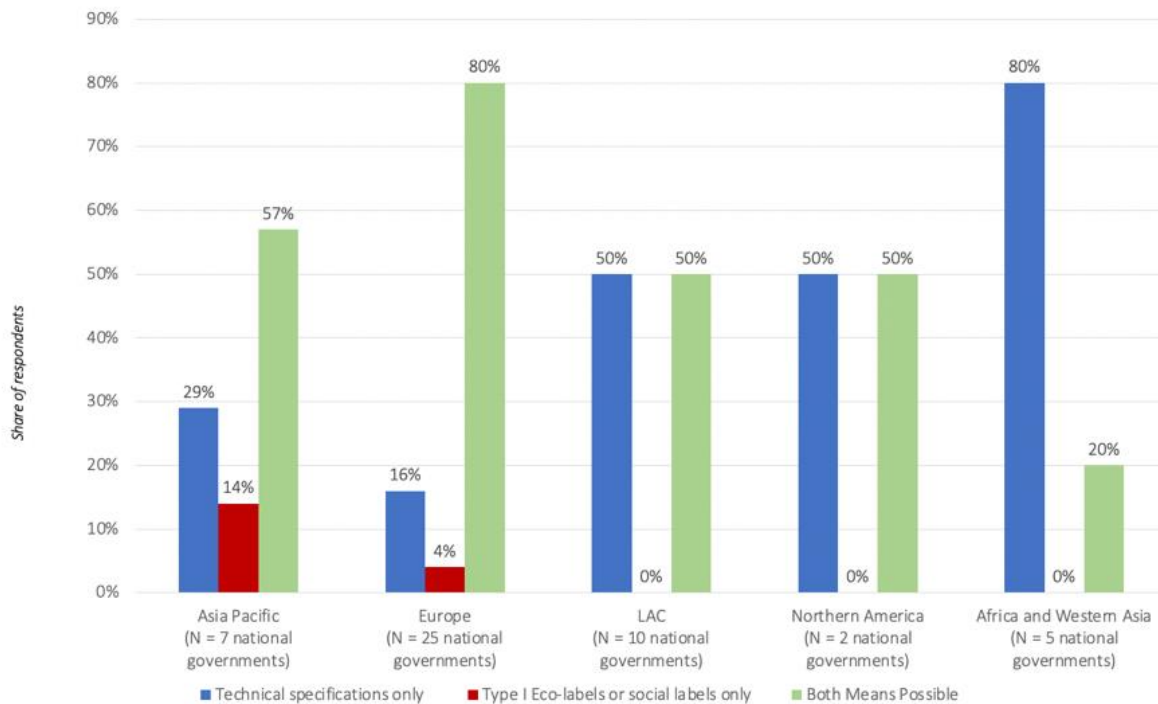


In the figures that follow, global and regional data on the inclusion of sustainability considerations at each stage of the procurement cycle is presented in greater detail and across reporting years.

*B1. Requirement definitions: Inclusion of sustainability requirements and functional/performance-based criteria in technical specifications*

All countries (100%) in compliance with SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reported that their legal frameworks allow for the inclusion of sustainability requirements in technical specifications and/or the use of type 1 eco-labels or sustainability standards as a reference, similar to the proportion recorded in 2020 (Figure 18). More than half of the countries (63% or 31 out of 49) reported that their legal frameworks allow for the inclusion of both sustainability requirements in technical specifications and the use of type 1 eco-labels, with some regional variation. The majority of European countries (80%)<sup>38</sup> indicated feasibility of both means, whereas, in contrast, in Africa and Western Asia only 20% of countries expressed such possibility. Two countries, Korea and Ireland, indicated that their legal framework only allows for references to eco-label requirements in the requirement/definitions stage.<sup>39</sup>

*Figure 18. Legal possibility for the inclusion of sustainability requirements in technical specifications*

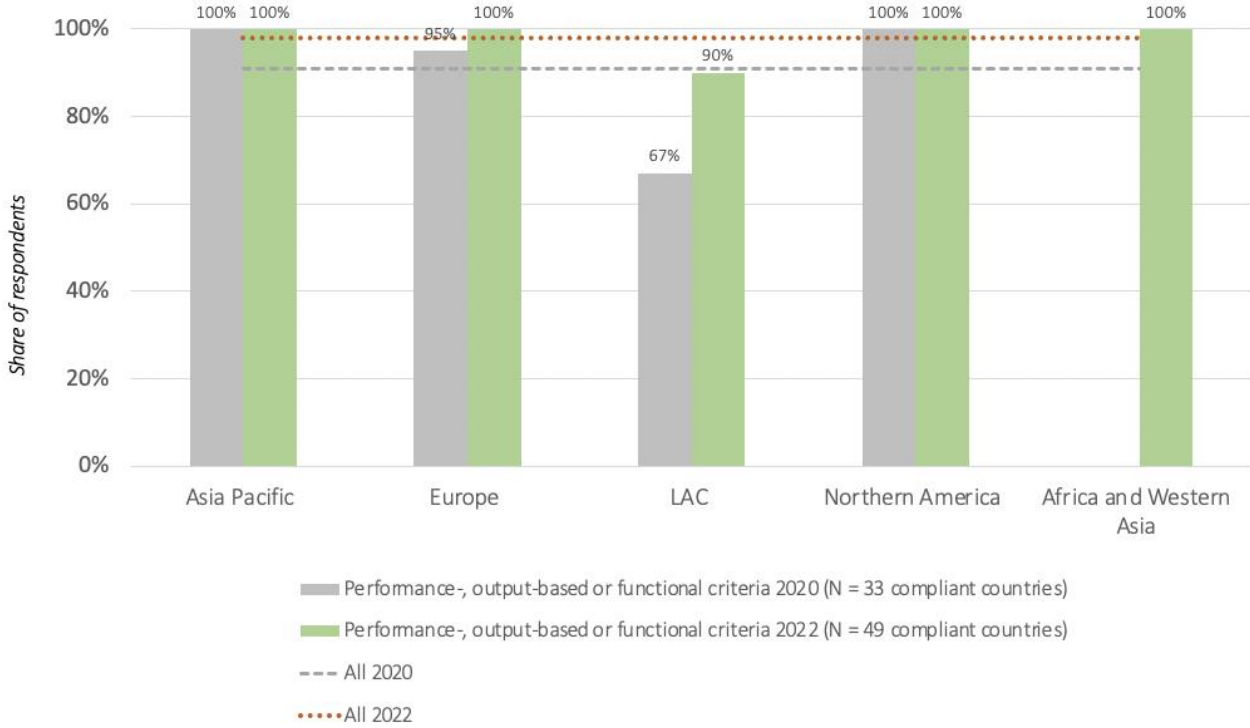


<sup>38</sup> This can be partly explained by the fact that EU countries have to mandatorily transpose the EU public procurement directive, which explicitly allows the use of ecolabels in tender evaluations, into their own legal framework.

<sup>39</sup> Both countries, however, reported that functional or performance requirements are also allowed.

The share of countries indicating the possibility of using functional, output-based and/or performance criteria when drafting technical specifications increased slightly, from 91% in 2020 to 98% in 2022 (Figure 19). The geographical distribution of these results shows that the Asia Pacific, Northern America, and Africa and Western Asia have all indicated 100% possibility, whereas there is a slight under-performance in Latin America and the Caribbean (90%), although progress in this area has been noted.

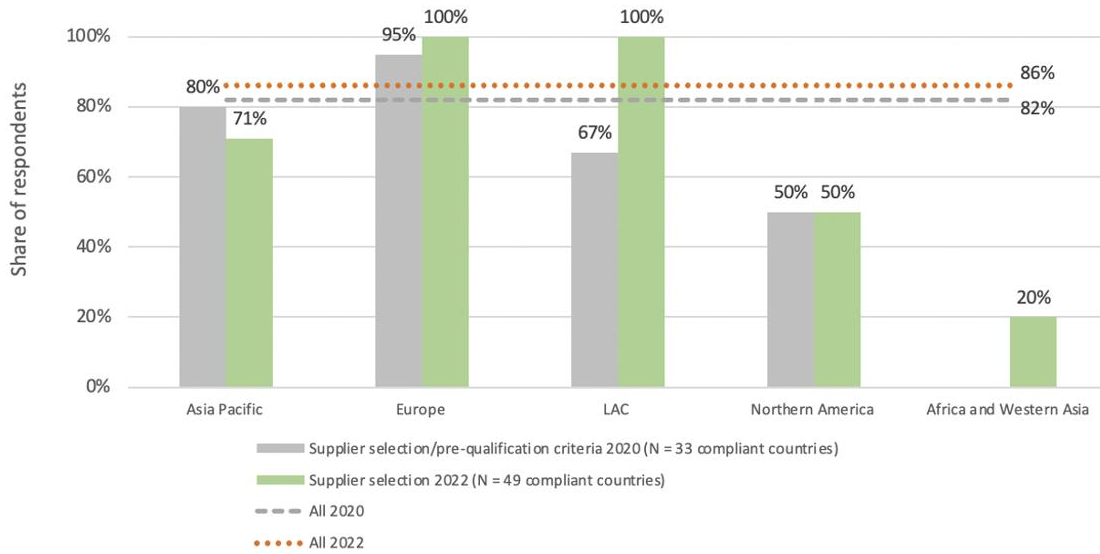
Figure 19. Possibility of including performance, output-based or functional criteria



B2. Prequalification/qualification

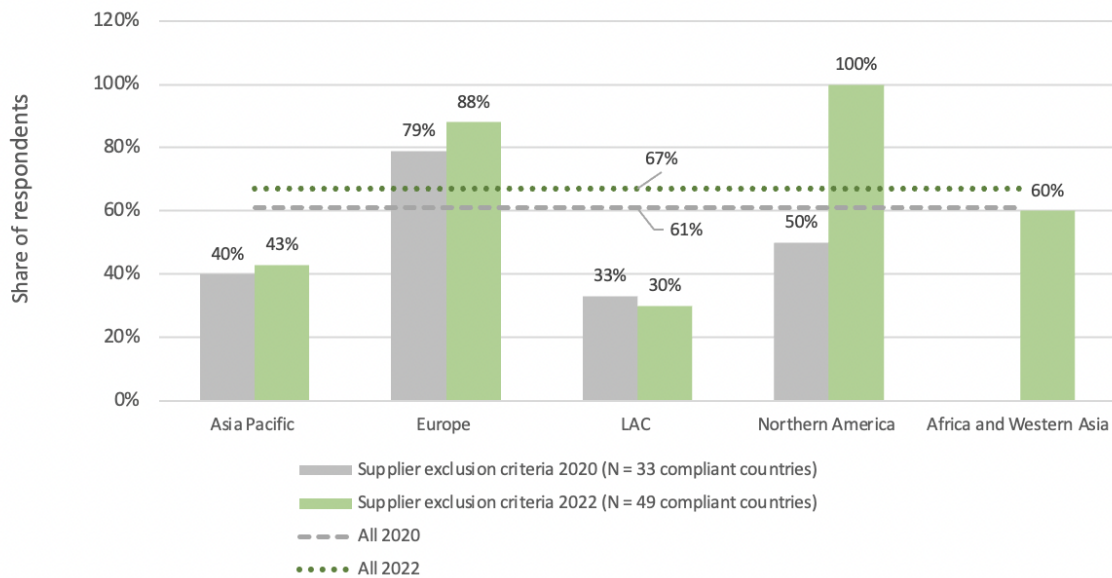
It was slightly less common for legal frameworks to include provisions allowing for sustainability requirements in supplier selection/pre-qualification criteria, with an 86% mean compared to 82% in 2020 (Figure 20). Nevertheless, notable regional variations exist, with legal frameworks in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean demonstrating a 100% possibility. The small drop in Asia Pacific’s regional average can be attributed to the addition of a first-time reporting country that does not allow for sustainability requirements supplier selection/pre-qualification criteria.

Figure 20. Possibility of using sustainability requirements as supplier selection/pre-qualification criteria



Legal frameworks showed limited allowance for the use of sustainability requirements as supplier exclusion criteria with a global mean of 67%, indicating a modest increase from 2020 (61%), as shown in Figure 21. The small drop in Latin America and the Caribbean’s regional average can be attributed to the addition of several first-time reporting countries that do not allow for sustainability requirements as supplier exclusion criteria. Conversely, the substantial increase from 50% to 100% in Northern America can be attributed to Canada’s [Directive on Public Procurement](#)<sup>40</sup> (2021), which now allows for such exclusions.

Figure 21. Possibility of using sustainability requirements as supplier exclusion criteria

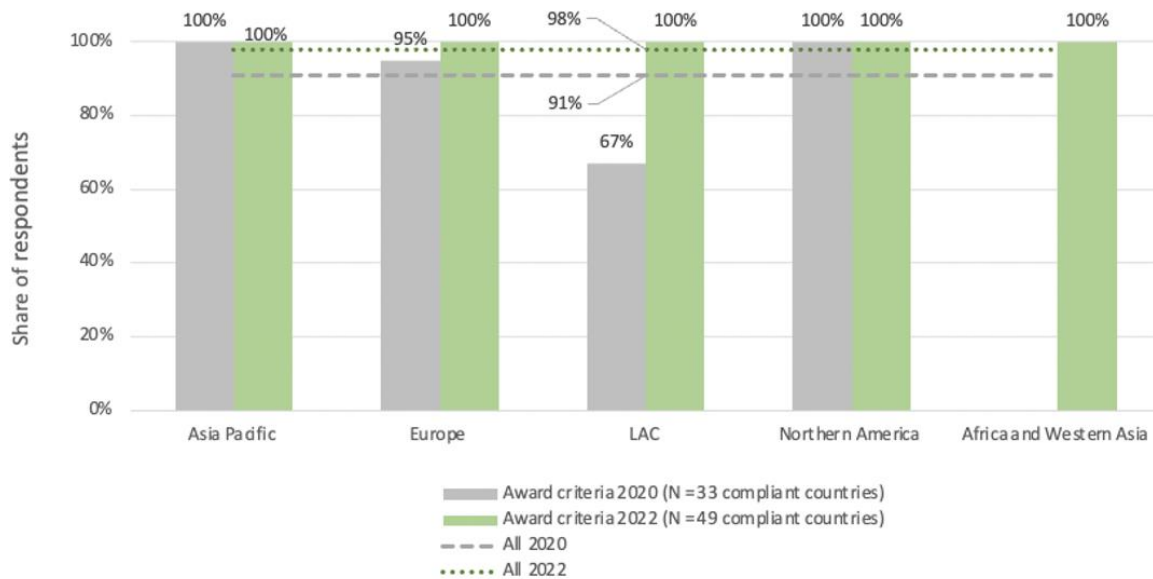


<sup>40</sup> [www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32692](http://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32692)

### B3. Evaluation

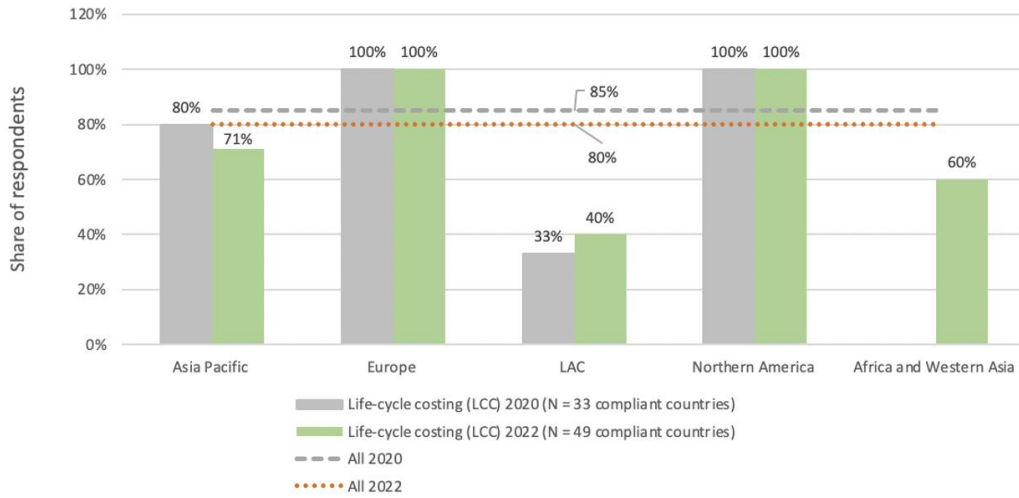
All countries reported having provisions within their legal frameworks that allow for the award of contracts based on criteria other than price (ie. ‘Most Economically Advantageous Tender’ – MEAT – and ‘Best Value for Money’), as illustrated in Figure 22. A significant increase was noted in the Latin America and Caribbean region, where the percentage of countries allowing for sustainability requirements as award criteria rose from 67% in 2020 to 100% in 2022. All first-time reporting countries in this region allowed for this possibility, whereas the two countries which had previously reported not having this possibility provided new evidence supporting the inclusion of such award criteria.

Figure 22. Possibility of using sustainability requirements as award criteria



Provisions to allow for the use of life cycle costing in the evaluation of tenders was common to the legal frameworks in Europe and Northern America, however less common in other regions, with a global average of 85%, up from 80% in 2020 (Figure 23). The small drop in Asia Pacific’s regional average can be attributed to the addition of a first-time reporting country that does not allow for the use of life cycle costing in the evaluation of tenders.

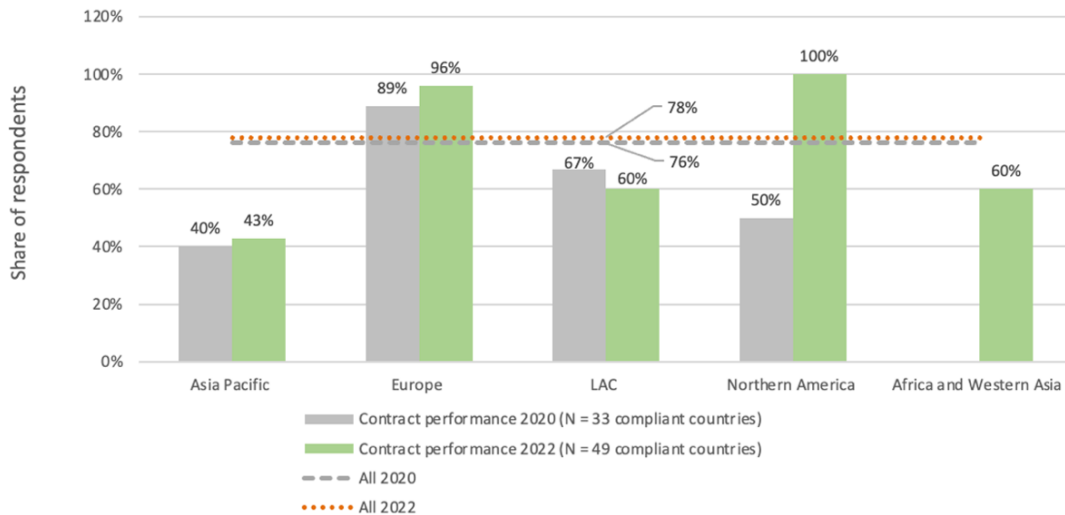
Figure 23. Possibility of considering Life-cycle costing (LCC) in evaluation of tenders



#### B4. Contract award and management

Regional variation was also observed in the inclusion of provisions allowing for the use of sustainability requirements as contract performance clauses, with a global average of 78% compared to 76% in 2020 (Figure 24). Such provisions were most prevalent in the legal frameworks of Europe and Northern America and less common in the other regions. In many cases where countries lacked provisions within their legal framework explicitly allowing for the use of sustainability requirements as contract performance clauses, participants considered that this aspect was implicit in other parts of their legal text, specifically in provisions that allow for sustainability requirements to be included in technical specifications. However, in these cases credit could not be granted. Again the substantial increase from 50% to 100% in Northern America can be attributed to new policies in Canada ([Code of Conduct for Procurement, 2021](#)), which now allow for such inclusions.

Figure 24. Possibility of using sustainability requirements as contract performance clauses

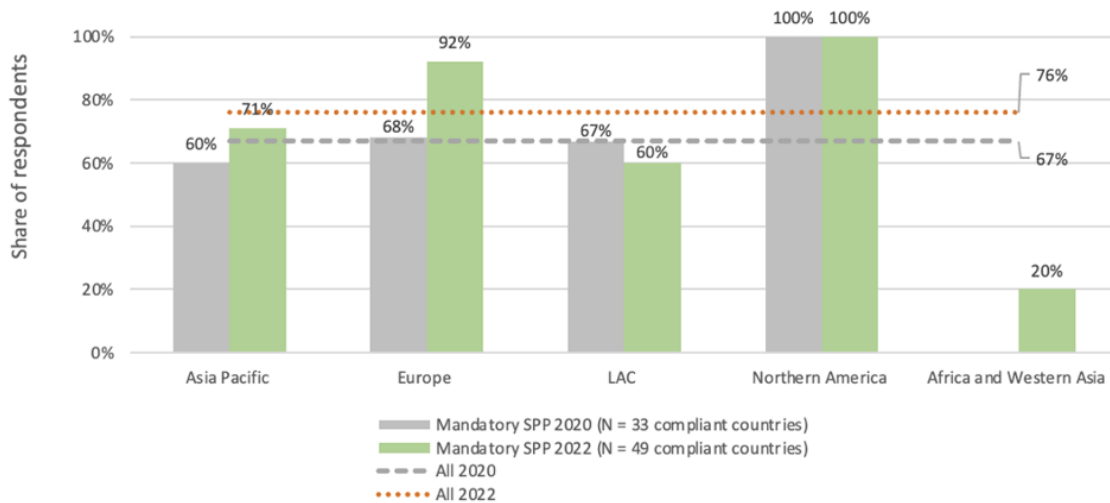




*B(b) Provisions in the legal and regulatory framework mandating the procurement of sustainable alternatives*

The share of countries indicating that the procurement of more sustainable goods/services is mandatory for at least some categories of products increased from 67% (22 countries) in 2020 to 76% (37 countries) in 2022, as seen in Figure 25. This positive trend is particularly notable in Europe, where countries continue to transpose the European Union [Clean Vehicles Directive](#)<sup>41</sup> into their legal frameworks. A slightly smaller increase was noted in Asia, where some countries mandate the procurement of certain product categories, whereas others, such as the Republic of Korea, mandate the procurement of all prioritized green labeled products. The drop in Latin America and the Caribbean can be attributed to the fact that all first-time reporting countries did not have a mandate for the procurement of sustainable products. The most commonly mandated products (in descending order of frequency) include vehicles, followed by air conditioning units, office IT, and paper products. Other mandated products comprise lighting, appliances, building materials, furniture, cleaning products, tires. Additionally, some countries reported implementing a ban on plastics.

*Figure 25. Mandatory procurement of sustainable alternatives for certain types of products or services*



**3.3 Sub-indicator C: Practical support delivered to procurement practitioners in the implementation of SPP**

National governments engage in a wide range of activities and measures to support and facilitate the implementation of sustainable public procurement. Sub-indicator C evaluates the extent of practical support provided to public procurement practitioners in SPP implementation through the following measures:

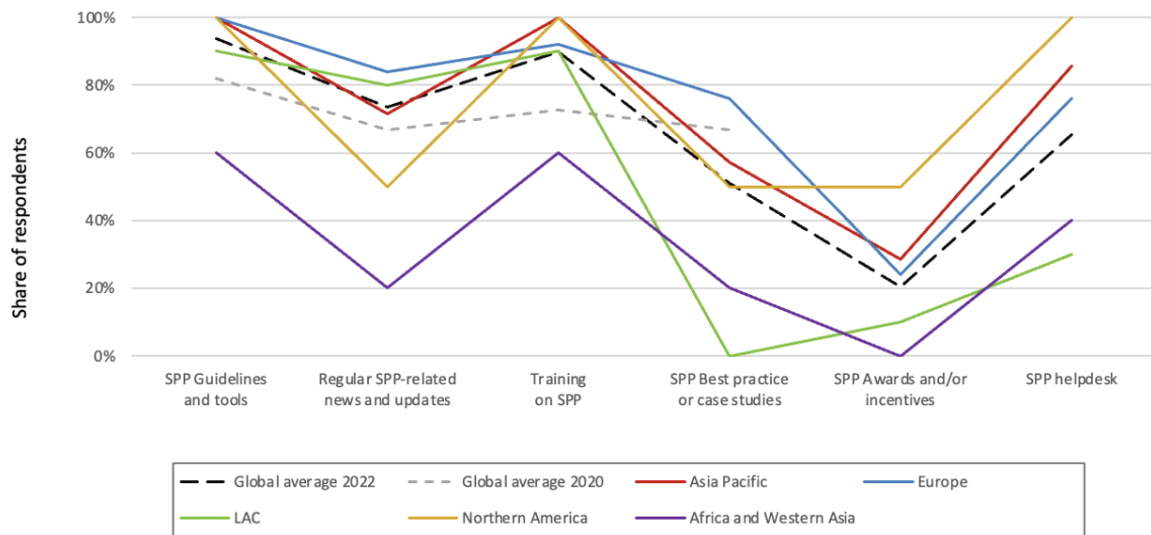
- C1. The development of ‘SPP guidelines and tools,’ or an official catalog of eco-labeled products.
- C2. Regular communication of ‘SPP-related news and updates’ to keep procurement practitioners informed.
- C3. ‘Training on SPP’ to enhance the understanding and expertise of procurement professionals.

<sup>41</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1161/oj>

- C4. Dissemination of ‘SPP best practices and case studies’ to showcase successful examples and encourage adoption.
- C5. Issuance of ‘SPP awards or incentives’ to recognize and reward public entities for their SPP implementation efforts.
- C6. Availability of an ‘SPP helpdesk’ to provide practical support and guidance to procurement practitioners.

Nearly all compliant countries (96% or 47 out of 49) reported at least one practical support measure to facilitate SPP implementation, marking a small but notable increase over 2020 findings (82% or 27 out of 33). Figure 26 presents the average global performance of national governments for each support measure, comparing it to the global averages from 2020, alongside the average performance per region in 2022.

Figure 26. Practical support provided in SPP implementation<sup>42</sup>



The development of ‘SPP guidelines and tools’ remains the most prevalent measure, reported by 94% of national governments (47 countries). This is followed by ‘training on SPP’ (90% of 40 countries) and the dissemination of ‘regular SPP-related news and updates’ (73% or 36 countries). Training was offered through various modalities, such as in-person and virtual conferences and training workshops, as well as pre-recorded training presentations and modules. News was mostly shared via a public procurement or dedicated SPP website, although some countries had SPP-specific newsletters.

A smaller share of countries (65%) reported having an ‘SPP helpdesk’ available to procurement practitioners. Few countries, however, indicated a helpdesk exclusively dedicated to SPP and there was some variation in terms of the modality. For example, the [Netherlands](#), [Paraguay](#), and [Slovenia](#) offer an

<sup>42</sup> It's important to note that in the 2022 revision of SDG Indicator 12.7.1 methodology, an additional question (C5) was introduced within sub-indicator C. This question asked whether the national government recognizes SPP/GPP best practices and achievements through awards and/or incentives. As a result of this change, 2 points were reallocated from (C4), which deals with the dissemination of SPP best practices/case studies, to this new question. Consequently, the original point value of C4 decreased from 4 points to 2 points. Therefore, the reduction in the value of C4 in 2022 may not necessarily indicate a decline in performance within this sub-indicator.

online form for submitting inquiries related to SPP, whereas [Greece](#) provides email links to relevant staff across government who can respond to SPP queries, and [Austria](#) and [Norway](#) both provide an email and phone number. For the most part, this function was assumed by the more general public procurement helpdesk, or specific contact points within government who could be reached via email or phone.

Another less common measure was the development and dissemination of ‘SPP best practices or case studies,’ a practice that is predominant in Europe where SPP practices are shared via web pages (ie. the [Czech Republic](#)) or newsletters (ie. [Lithuania](#)),<sup>43</sup> although it was also reported by several Asia Pacific countries (China, Japan and New Zealand) and Canada.

The issuance of ‘SPP awards or incentives’ was a relatively infrequent practice, observed among only 20% of national governments or 10 countries (Chile, China, Cyprus, Finland, France, Korea, Rep. of, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, United States). Such awards were typically issued in recognition of outstanding institutional performance in SPP implementation ([Korea, Rep. of](#)<sup>44</sup>), acknowledgment of provincial or municipal best practices ([Netherlands](#)<sup>45</sup>), or the celebration of individual or team excellence in innovative approaches to procurement ([United States](#)<sup>46</sup>). For many countries this practice is new and/or is carried out on an ad hoc basis. However, there are exceptions, such as [France](#),<sup>47</sup> where this tradition has been ongoing for a number of years (16 editions) across various categories.

Global data across reporting years shows that the proportion of countries providing support measures for SPP implementation has increased significantly. The most substantial growth was observed in the availability of an SPP helpdesk, which increased by 40% (from 39% in 2020 to 65% in 2022). This was closely followed by an 18% increase in SPP training (from 73% in 2020 to 90% in 2022). These positive developments reflect the growing commitment among countries to support and facilitate the implementation of sustainable procurement practices.

### 3.4 Sub-indicator D: SPP purchasing criteria

Sustainable public procurement purchasing criteria are essential guidelines for incorporating sustainability considerations in procurement processes. This sub-indicator evaluates whether countries have established environmental (Da) and socio-economic (Db) criteria that can be integrated in their procurement procedures. By having well-defined SPP purchasing criteria, governments can ensure that their procurement decisions align with sustainability objectives, promoting environmentally-friendly and socially-responsible practices across various sectors and industries.

#### *Da. Categories of products or services for which green procurement criteria have been developed*

Participants were asked to select a maximum of 18 product or service categories, from a list of 24 commonly found categories, for which they had developed environmental criteria or defined environmental

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<sup>43</sup> [https://vpt.lrv.lt/uploads/vpt/documents/files/%C5%BDVP\\_%20NAUJIENLAI%C5%A0KIS\\_Nr\\_%201\\_\(2\).pdf](https://vpt.lrv.lt/uploads/vpt/documents/files/%C5%BDVP_%20NAUJIENLAI%C5%A0KIS_Nr_%201_(2).pdf)

<sup>44</sup>

<https://me.go.kr/home/web/board/read.do?pagerOffset=0&maxPageItems=10&maxIndexPages=10&searchKey=title&searchValue=%EB%85%B9%EC%83%89%EC%A0%9C%ED%92%88&menuId=10525&orgCd=&boardId=1546950&boardMasterId=1&boardCategoryId=&decorator=>

<sup>45</sup> [www.pianoo.nl/nl/themas/maatschappelijk-verantwoord-inkopen/beleid-en-uitvoering/koopwijsprijs](http://www.pianoo.nl/nl/themas/maatschappelijk-verantwoord-inkopen/beleid-en-uitvoering/koopwijsprijs)

<sup>46</sup> [www.fai.gov/about/award-programs](http://www.fai.gov/about/award-programs)

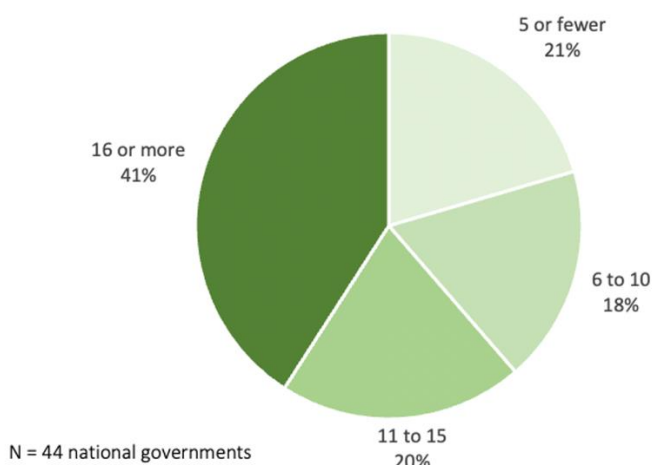
<sup>47</sup> [www.tropheescommandepublique.com](http://www.tropheescommandepublique.com)

standards/labels. Each category could be selected only once. Two additional categories could be added for which criteria or labels had been developed but were not included in the predefined list.

As in 2020, 90% of compliant countries have developed environmental criteria for one or more product/service categories. Out of these 44 countries, 66% (29 countries) have developed criteria for 10 or more product categories (compared to 48% in 2020), 41% have developed criteria for 15 or more categories (compared to 30% in 2020), and 20% (9 countries) have developed criteria for five or fewer categories (compared to 27% in 2020), as illustrated in Figure 27. This data shows that while the proportion of countries with sustainability criteria remains the same as in 2020, a greater share of countries have developed criteria for 10 or 15 or more product categories, indicating an expansion of sustainability criteria into new products groups.

*Figure 27. Percent of national governments that have developed a set number of product criteria*

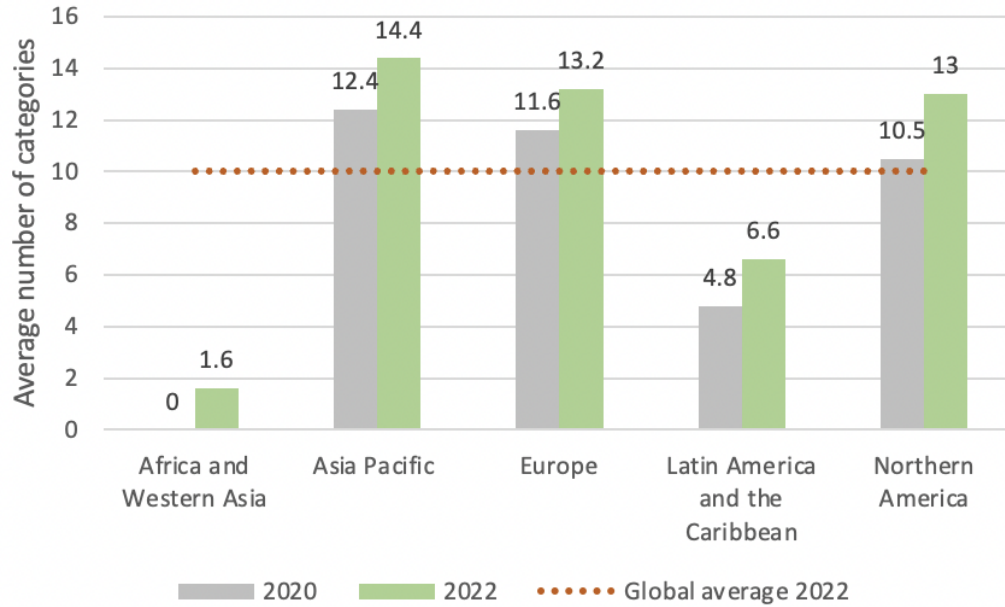
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On average national governments developed environmental criteria for 11 product/service categories, similar to 2020 results (10 categories). However, regional averages, particularly for Africa and Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, considerably deviate from the global average, as shown in Figure 28. Despite these variations, all regions showed progress in the development of criteria compared to 2020 results, indicating a positive trend.

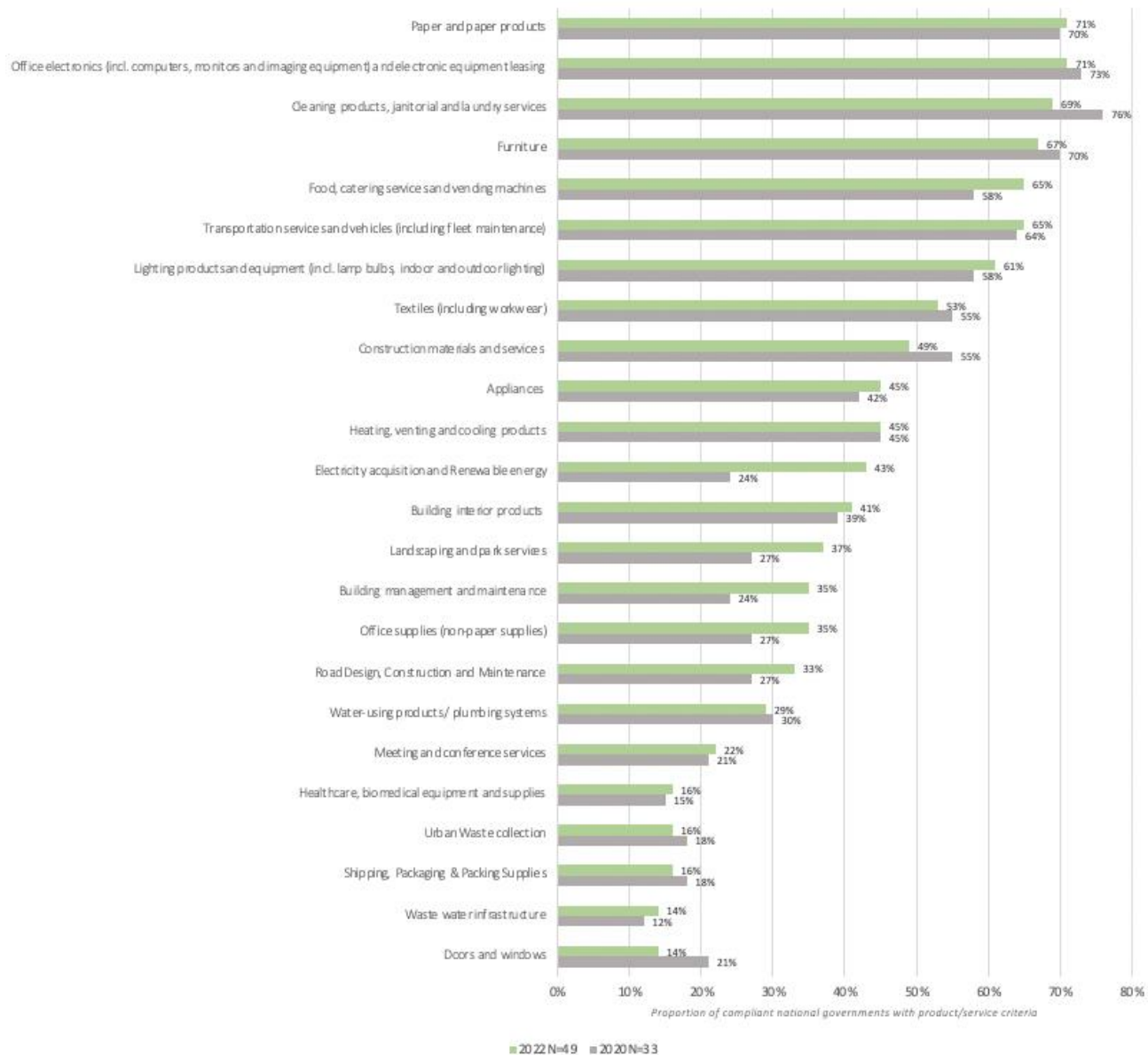
*Figure 28. Average number of product categories, per region, for which environmental criteria have been developed*

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The five most common product/service categories for which environmental criteria had been developed continue to be the common use categories of office electronics, paper and paper products, cleaning products, and furniture, all reported by more than 70% of national governments (Figure 29). These product categories have well-established sustainability standards or eco-labels and are more readily available on the market. While the majority of the remaining product/service categories have held steady in the rankings since 2020, a few changes were observed. Notably, a significant increase was observed in the proportion of countries with environmental criteria for electricity acquisition and renewable energy - from 24% in 2020 to 43% in 2022 (a 44% increase). Additionally, 30% more national governments reported having developed environmental criteria for ‘building management and maintenance’ and ‘landscaping and park services.’ These findings suggest a growing emphasis on incorporating sustainability considerations in sectors such as energy and infrastructure management.

*Figure 29. Product/service categories for which environmental criteria have been developed, 2020 and 2022*



Small changes were also noted in the distribution of these products/services categories across regions (Figure 30). The categories for which environmental criteria were developed in Africa and Western Asia (by Israel, Kenya and Morocco) were ‘appliances,’ ‘cleaning products,’ ‘construction materials and services,’ ‘heating, venting and cooling products,’ ‘lighting products,’ ‘office electronics,’ and ‘transportation services.’ Five out of these seven categories were accounted for by Israel.

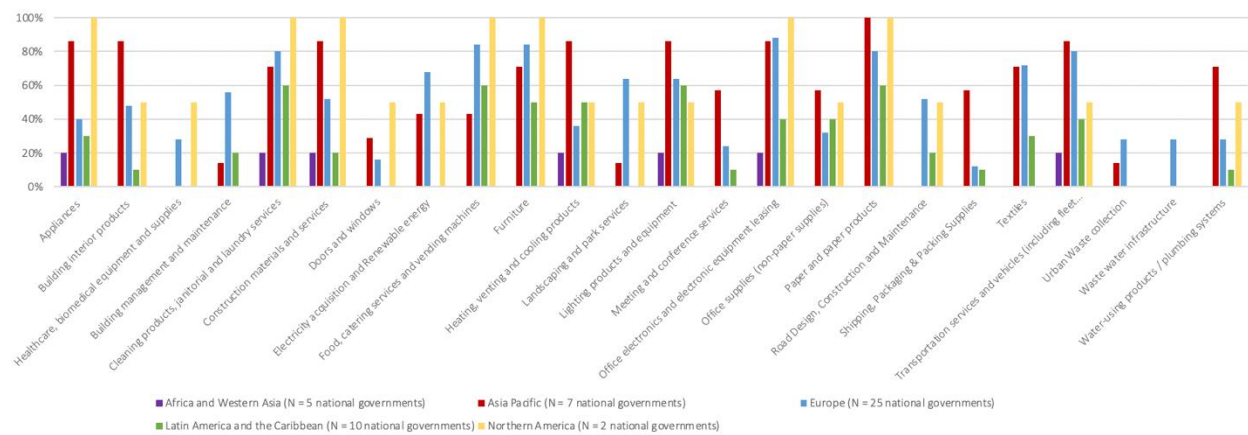
In the Asia Pacific, over 80% of compliant national governments have established environmental criteria for eight specific categories: appliances; building interior products; construction materials and services; heating, venting and cooling products; lighting products and equipment; office electronics; paper and paper products; and transportation services and vehicles.

In Northern America, both Canada and the United States have developed environmental criteria for 7 categories: appliances; cleaning products, janitorial and laundry services; construction materials and

services; food catering services and vending machines; furniture; office electronics; paper and paper products.

In Europe the following 6 categories stand out: cleaning products, janitorial and laundry services; food catering services and vending machines; furniture; office electronics; paper and paper products; and transportation services and vehicles.

Figure 30. Product/service categories for which environmental criteria have been developed distributed by region

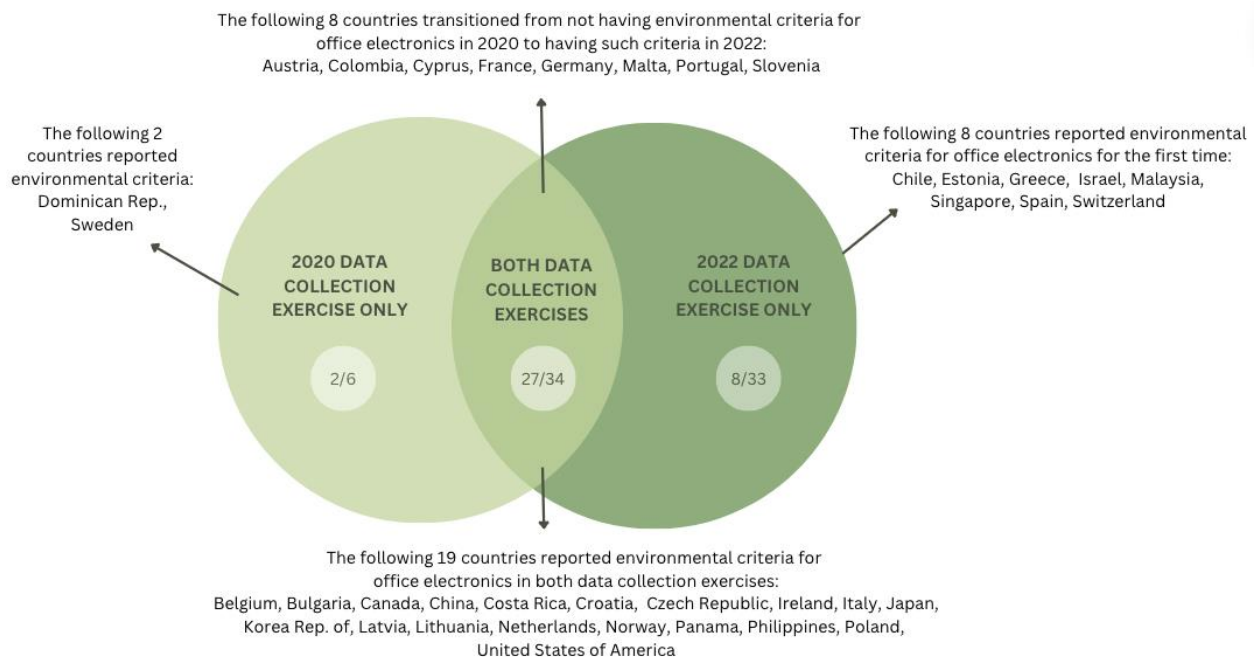


In addition to the 24 common product/service categories, several countries reported having developed environmental criteria for other categories not included in the list. These were: toys for early childhood centers, noted by two countries; and bicycles, event organization, publishing and printing services, reclaimed rubber, demolition, and financial products - each noted by one country. Such examples demonstrate the diverse range of product and service categories for which national governments are incorporating sustainability criteria into their procurement processes.

## Progress in the Sustainable Public Procurement of Office Electronics

Office electronics has consistently remained among the top three product/service categories prioritized for sustainable procurement, tied for first place in 2022 with 'paper and paper products' (from second in 2020). Out of the 49 countries compliant with SDG Indicator 12.7.1, 35 (71%) reported having developed environmental criteria or standards for the public procurement of office electronics. Among these 35 countries, 27 participated in both the 2020 and 2022 data collection exercises, and out of them, 8 countries which had previously reported the absence of environmental criteria for office electronics, indicated in 2022 that such criteria had been developed (Figure 31). This positive trend reflects the increasing recognition of the environmental impact of office electronics and the growing commitment among national governments in steering markets towards greener technologies.

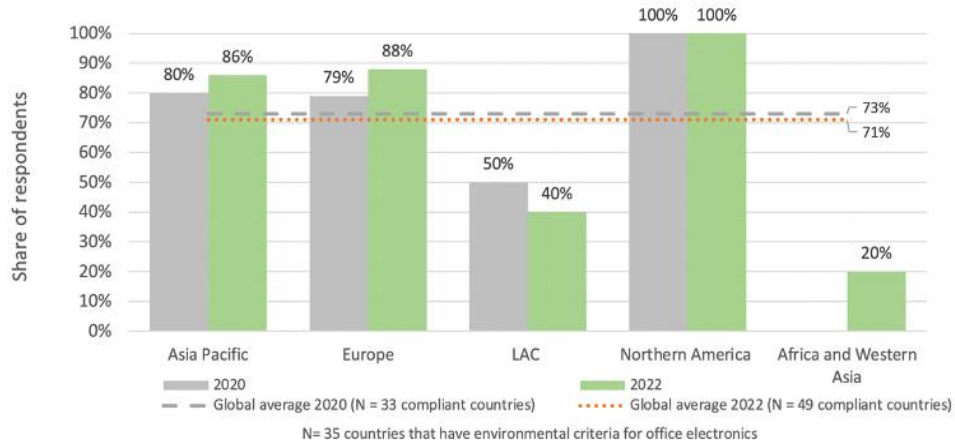
*Figure 31. Participating countries that reported environmental criteria for procuring office electronics 2020 and 2022*





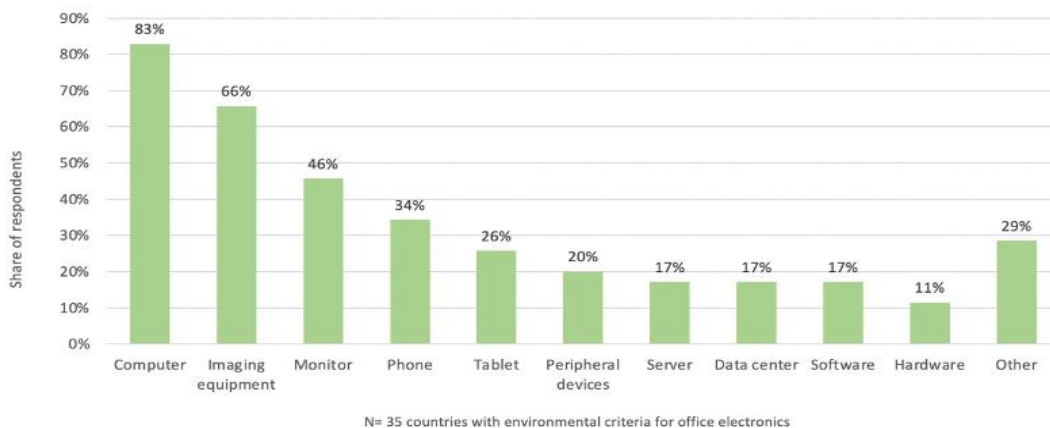
A regional analysis shows that Europe and the Asia Pacific both saw significant increase in the share of countries adopting environmental criteria for office electronics, and Northern America maintained a 100% share (Figure 32). However, the global average slightly dropped from 73% in 2020 to 71% in 2022. This decline can be explained by the fact that most countries new to SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting scored lower than global average in this category.

Figure 32. Share of participating countries where environmental criteria have been developed for office electronics



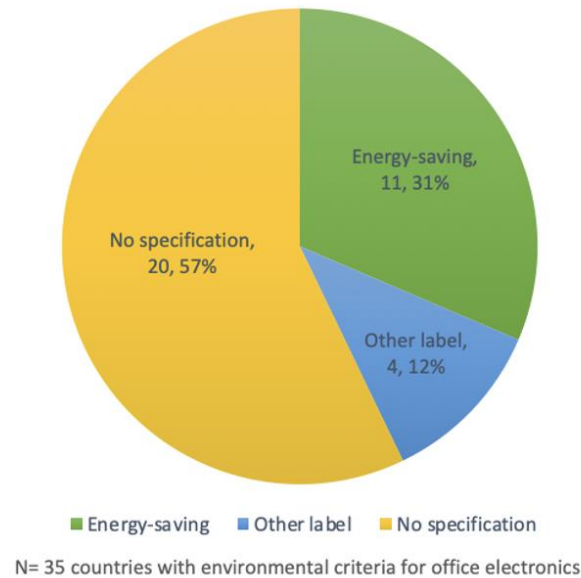
Countries have developed environmental criteria for a broad range of products falling under the ‘office electronics’ category. As shown in Figure 33, such criteria have been most frequently developed for computers (83%, including desktops and laptops) and imaging equipment (66%, including printers, scanners, copiers, etc.), followed by monitors (46%), phones (34%, including landline phones, mobile phones, etc.), tablets (26%), and peripheral devices (20%, including mouse, keyboards, etc.). It was less common for countries to have environmental criteria for servers (17%), data centers (17%), software (17%), and hardware (11%). The unclassified category of items – ‘other’ - constitutes 29% of the total, encompassing items such as display screens (Bulgaria), projectors (Germany), audio-visual equipment (the Netherlands), and so forth.

Figure 33. Types of office electronics for which environmental criteria have been developed



Only 15 out of the 35 countries that reported having developed environmental criteria for office electronics indicated the sustainability focus of the eco-labels they recommended for the procurement of these products. Among these, 11 pointed to energy-saving labels and 4 countries indicated other labels with a broader focus, encompassing factors such as energy efficiency, eco-design, recyclability, environmental performance, etc. (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Environmental criteria labels for office electronics



Nine countries specified the labels they recommend for office electronics procurement, shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Recommended labels for sustainable procurement of office electronics

Country	Label
Belgium	Environmental and sustainable labels
Canada	Energy Star, EPEAT
China	China Environmental Labelling
Croatia	EU Green Public Procurement (GPP)
Czech Republic	Energy Star, EPEAT, TCO
Malaysia	GGP Guidelines 3.0
Spain	EU Green Public Procurement (GPP)
Singapore	Energy Star
United States of America	Energy Star, Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP)-designated

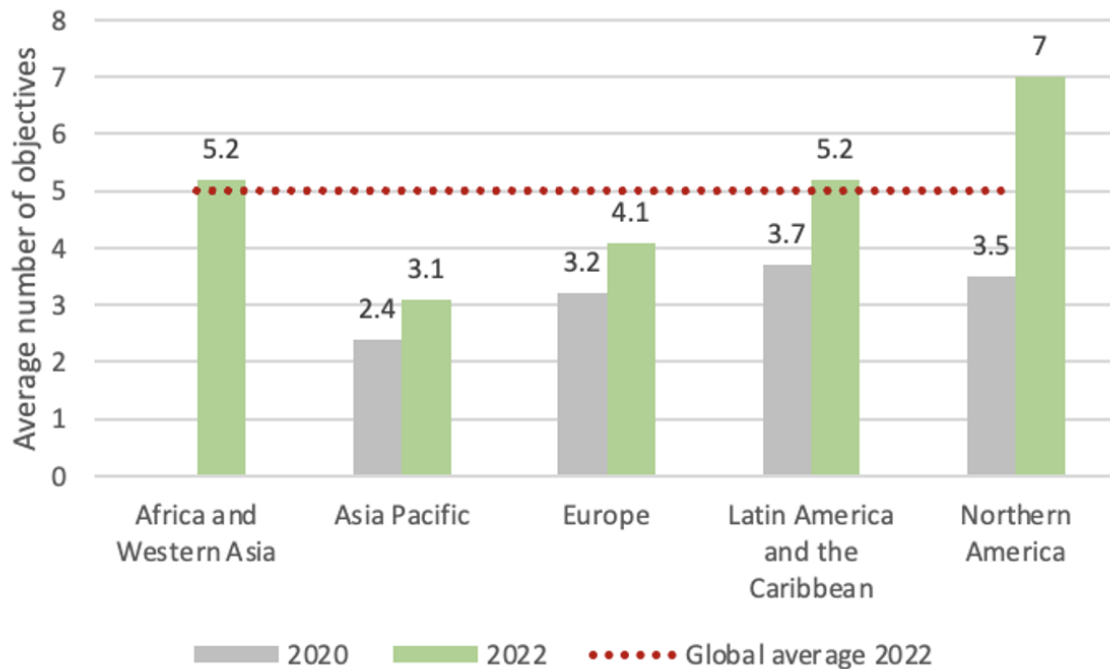
Despite significant progress in sustainable procurement of office electronics, this practice is still largely implemented on a voluntary basis across the majority of countries. Only a handful of countries (ie. Canada, China, Singapore and the United States) mandate the procurement of such green technologies. This indicates that there is an opportunity for national governments to enact further legislation, sending a stronger signal to the market.

*b. Social, economic and governance-related criteria*

Sustainable public procurement can serve as an important policy tool to further social, economic and governance-related objectives. For this reason, participating national governments were asked to indicate from a list of 10 socio-economic and governance-related priorities, which, if any, could be addressed through public procurement. Findings indicate that a vast majority of compliant countries (44 out of 49, or 90%) have policies in place supporting the inclusion of at least one or more of such concerns in procurement processes, which is a slight increase compared to 2022 (28 out of 33, or 85%). More notable, however, is the greater proportion of countries (27 or 61%) that address 5 or more of such concerns in public procurement, compared to 2020 (21%). Conversely, fewer countries (17 or 39%) addressed between 1 and 4 concerns, a decline from 2020 (79%).

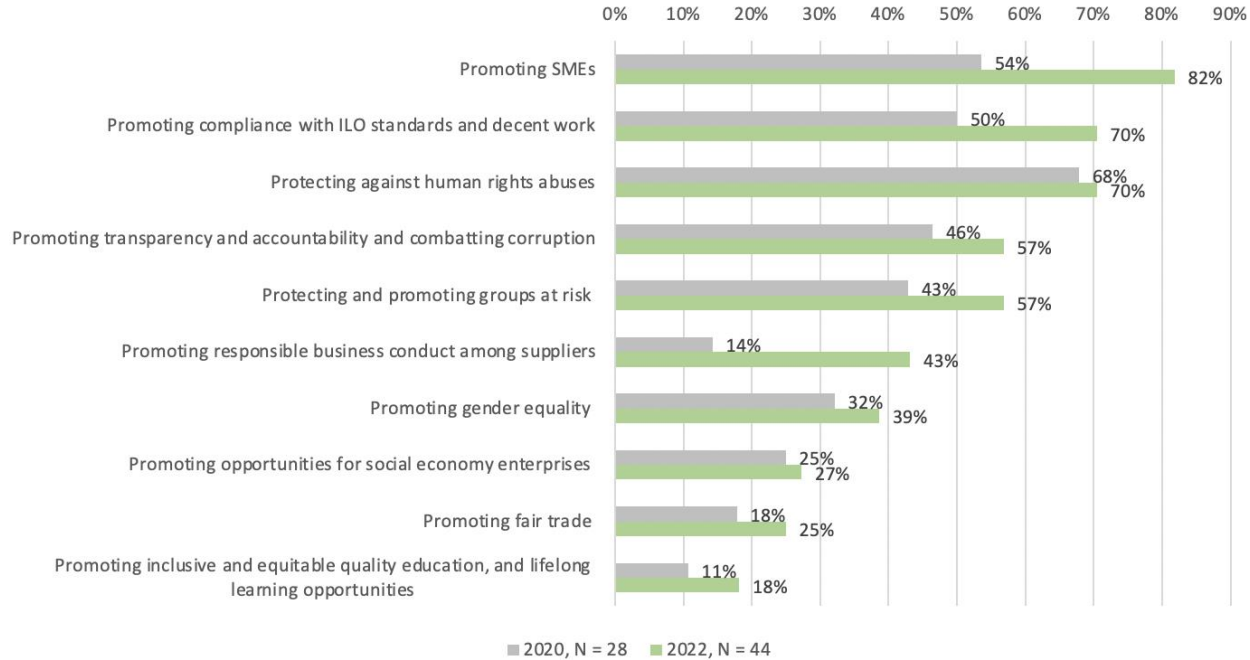
On average, countries pursued 5 socio-economic and governance-related objectives through SPP, which is higher than the average of 3 in 2020. Regional averages show variation, however, with Northern America, Africa and Western Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, all above the global average of 5 objectives (Figure 35). These results highlight a positive trend towards a more holistic approach to sustainable public procurement, with a growing number of countries now incorporating multiple socio-economic and governance-related objectives into their procurement processes.

*Figure 35. Average number of social, economic and/or governance-related objectives, per region, addressed through public procurement*



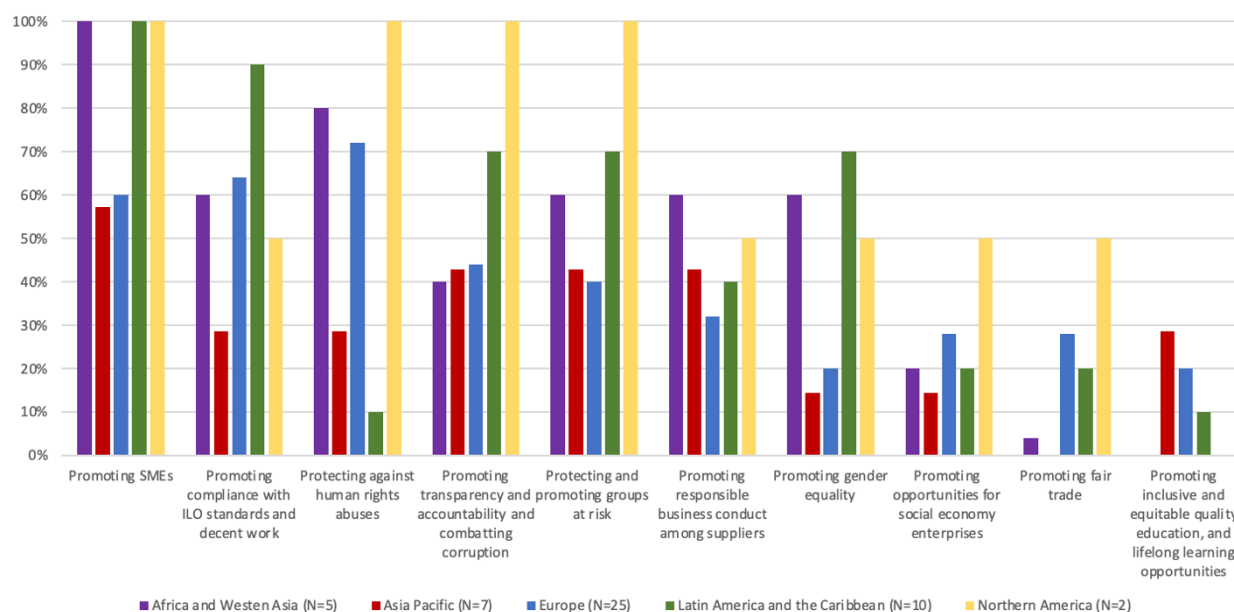
Among the various objectives addressed through SPP, the most common is ‘promoting SMEs’ (82%), followed by ‘promoting compliance with ILO standards’ (70%) and ‘protecting against human rights abuses’ (68%). The least common concern is ‘promoting inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities,’ perhaps because it’s less directly related to SPP. All of the objectives saw an increase in the proportion of national governments addressing them through public procurement, with ‘promoting responsible business conduct among suppliers’ seeing the greatest increase from 14% in 2020 to 43% in 2022, as shown in Figure 36.

Figure 36. Most common social, economic and governance-related considerations addressed in SPP implementation, 2020 and 2022



Overall Africa and Western Asia, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean performed the strongest in the integration of social, economic and governance-related criteria in public procurement, with 60% or more of countries addressing 5 or more criteria. The Asia Pacific, which performed the strongest in environmental criteria, showed considerable gaps in performance in social, economic and governance-related criteria vis-a-vis other regions. The promotion of gender equality, a less common consideration addressed through public procurement, showed relatively strong performance in Latin America and Caribbean and Africa and Western Asia compared to other regions. While the promotion of SMEs through public procurement was common among all regions, Africa and Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Northern America showed the strongest performance, with all participating national governments in these regions having policies in place supporting such enterprises. This data is presented in Figure 37.

Figure 37. Most common social, economic and governance-related considerations addressed in SPP implementation distributed by region<sup>48</sup>



Some countries are utilizing public procurement to address social challenges less commonly associated with sustainable public procurement, pioneering new avenues. For example, Italy has employed public procurement to tackle issues related to generational equality. In [Ireland](#),<sup>49</sup> efforts are being made to combat recidivism by fostering employment opportunities for individuals with previous convictions. Meanwhile, [Costa Rica](#)<sup>50</sup> is harnessing public procurement to bolster micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), support social enterprises, and uplift vulnerable groups in *regions characterized by lower socio-economic development*.

### 3.5 Sub-indicator E: Existence of an SPP monitoring system

Monitoring and evaluation enables policymakers to assess the effectiveness of their SPP policies and action plans, leading to better-informed decision-making. To identify and better understand SPP monitoring efforts at the national level, sub-indicator E assesses whether national governments monitor the following three aspects of SPP implementation:

<sup>48</sup> Special note: The low level of performance in "Protecting against human rights abuses" in the Latin America and Caribbean region can be attributed to an error in the Spanish version of the questionnaire, where this category was inadvertently omitted. The 20% score in this category reflects the response of Trinidad and Tobago, which used the English version of the questionnaire.

<sup>49</sup> [www.gov.ie/en/publication/76b9e-working-to-change-social-enterprise-and-employment-strategy-2021-2023](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/76b9e-working-to-change-social-enterprise-and-employment-strategy-2021-2023)

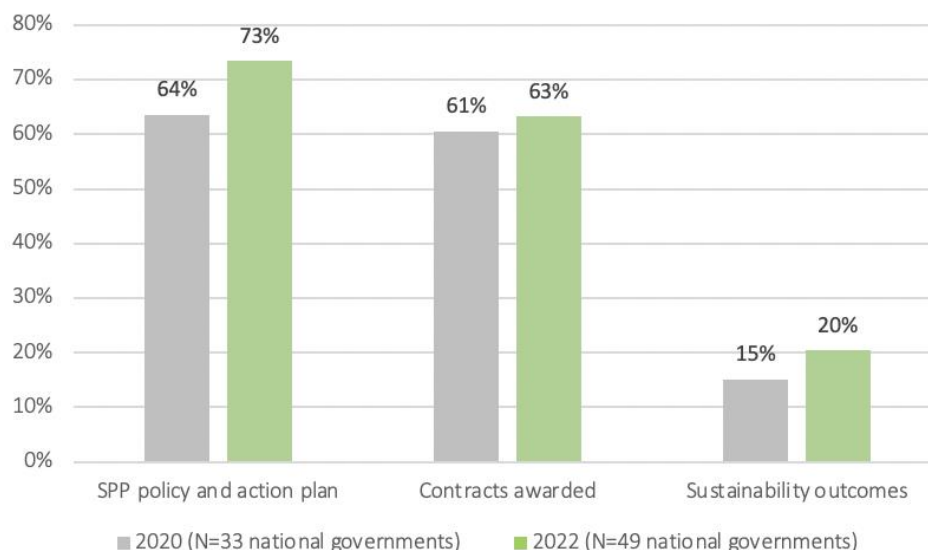
<sup>50</sup> [www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm\\_texto\\_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=93322&nValor3=123846&strTipM=TC](http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=93322&nValor3=123846&strTipM=TC)

1. *Institutionalization* or the integration of SPP in the culture and daily operations of organization. It includes measuring actions such as the adoption of SPP policies and/or the integration of sustainability considerations in procedures and tools;
2. *Outputs* or the direct results of procurement activities. It involves tracking metrics such as the number or value of contracts awarded that include sustainability criteria.
3. *Outcomes* or the benefits to or impacts on the environment and society generated by SPP practices. For instance, reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from sustainable public procurement of green products.

Sub-indicator E also evaluates whether national governments have set specific targets for SPP and the methods they employ for collecting SPP-related data.

As shown in Figure 38, findings on this sub-indicator suggest modest progress in the monitoring and evaluation of SPP at both the global and regional levels. SPP institutionalization remains the most widely monitored aspect of SPP, with 73% of countries (36) indicating active monitoring of their SPP policy or action plan implementation, showing a notable increase compared to 64% (21 countries) in 2020. The majority of countries (63% or 31 countries) also measure SPP outputs, such as the number or value of contracts awarded, with a negligible increase since 2020 (61% or 20 countries). While there has been some progress in the monitoring of SPP outcomes, with an increase from 15% (5 countries) in 2020 to 20% (10 countries) in 2022, measuring this aspect of SPP implementation remains challenging. The most common types of outcomes monitored are GHG emissions reduction, followed by quantifying energy savings (Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States). Less common outcomes included tracking air pollution (China), water savings (United States), renewable energy to power, as well as the number of enterprises participating in green labelling (China) and contracts awarded to SMEs employing persons with disabilities (Japan).

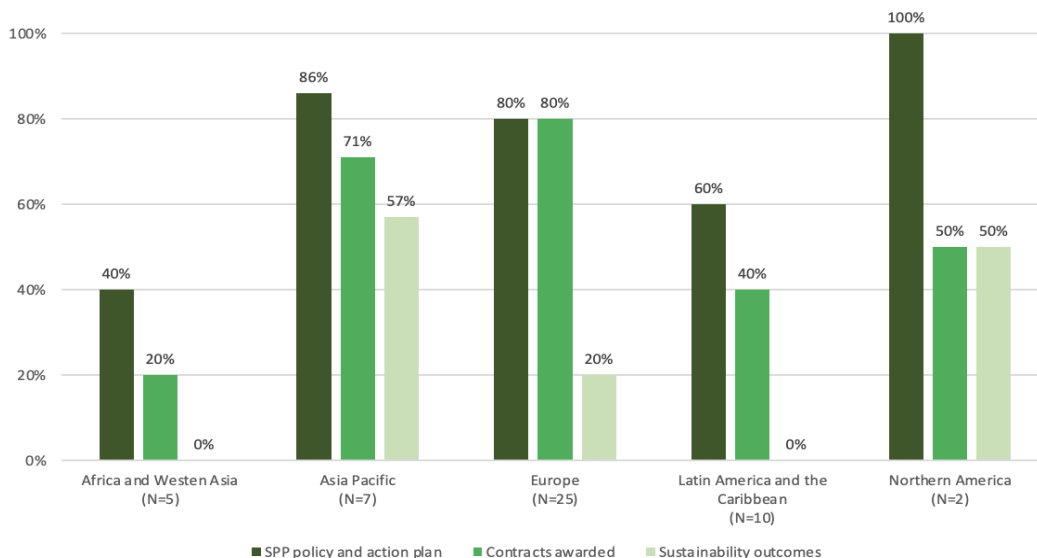
Figure 38. Aspects of SPP implementation monitored, 2020 and 2022



A regional analysis reveals variation in the degree of monitoring of different aspects of SPP (Figure 39). Strong performance was noted in the monitoring of SPP institutionalization in Northern America (100%), the Asia Pacific (86%), and Europe (80%). These findings are to be expected given the relatively more recent

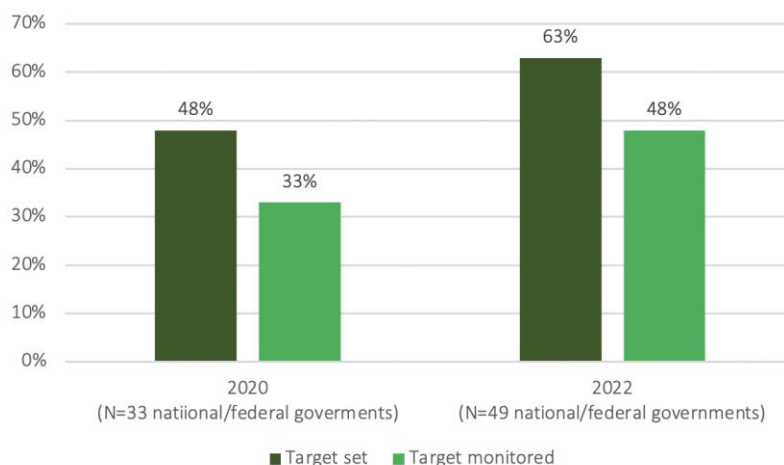
uptake of SPP in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Africa and Western Asia compared to the other regions. While Europe (80%) and the Asia Pacific (71%) also show strong performance in the monitoring of contracts awarded, the Asia Pacific (57%) stands out in terms of monitoring SPP outcomes.

Figure 39. Regional comparison of aspects of SPP monitored



Countries continue to set targets for SPP implementation, with 63% of countries (31) setting one or more targets, compared to 48% (16 countries) in 2020 (Figure 40). However, fewer than half (45% or 22 countries) monitor progress toward achieving those objectives, a notable increase from 33% (11 countries) in 2020.

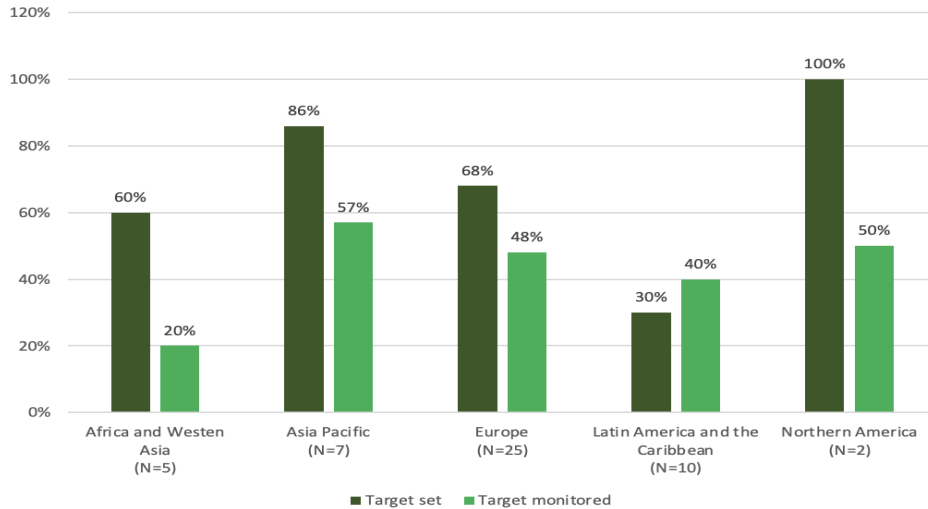
Figure 40. SPP target setting and monitoring, 2020 and 2022



Target setting is a common practice in Northern America (100%) and the Asia Pacific (86%), although all regions, apart from Latin America and the Caribbean, show considerably weaker performance in target monitoring (Figure 41). This variance can be attributed to a distinct case in Argentina – while a specific

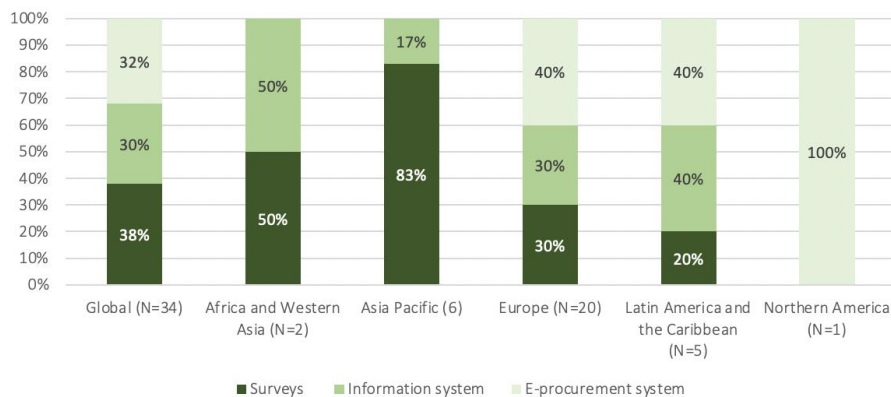
target has not been defined, their sustainable public procurement indicator allocates scores and provides recommendations for improvement against different baselines of each government agency.

Figure 41. Regional comparison of SPP target setting and monitoring



Countries were also asked to specify the methods employed for gathering SPP-related data and information. This collection process can encompass conventional approaches such as surveys, self-assessment, or included in regular reporting to hierarchy. Alternatively, it might involve more sophisticated methods, such as utilizing an internal information system or a comprehensive e-procurement platform. Thirty-four countries, or 67%, provided details concerning the means for which data was collected, as illustrated in Figure 42. In contrast to 2020, where a significant majority of countries (67%) indicated reliance on traditional data collection methods, results from 2022 show that there is a nearly even distribution among the various approaches, with 38% (13 countries) still employing traditional means, while 32% (11 countries) have adopted advanced e-procurement platforms, and 30% or 10 countries utilizing information systems. This points to a noteworthy trend towards procurement digitalization. Interestingly, the majority of countries in the Asia Pacific (83%) indicated using surveys.

Figure 42. Approach to collecting SPP data



### 3.6 Sub-indicator F: Percentage of sustainable public procurement

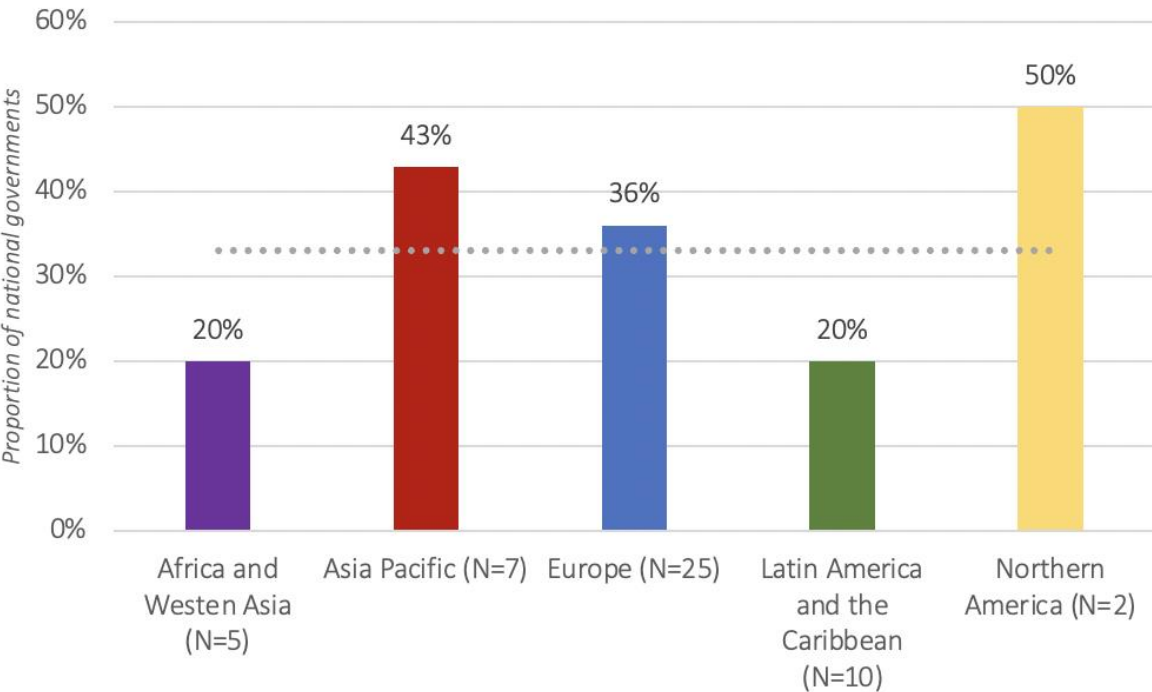


As a final question, participating national governments were asked to indicate the proportion of public procurement at the national level which is sustainable (based on the value of contracts which included sustainability requirements). Only 16 out of the 49 compliant countries, or 33%, were able to provide such data. Among these 16 countries, 14 participated in both the 2020 and 2022 data collection exercises, and out of them, 9 countries which previously did not report data on the share of provided such data in 2022. Conversely, only two countries new to SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting provided such data.

Sustainable procurement represented an average of 6% of total procurement, the highest percentage reaching 44% of procurement, with others ranging from 0.16% to 36%. This data is similar to 2020 findings where 27% of compliant countries or 9 out of 33, reported on this sub-indicator with similar results -. sustainable procurement represented an average of 8% of total procurement, the highest percentage reaching 40% of procurement, the others ranging from 0.01% to 12%.

The share of countries able to provide such detailed data was especially high in Northern America, the Asia Pacific and Europe (Figure 43). Interestingly, the same number of countries (6) obtained this data from elaborate e-procurement systems, as more basic tools such as surveys. The majority of countries (13) provided data on the value of contracts per product category (with some countries reporting data on up to 30 categories of products or as little as one product group), while 3 countries from the Asia Pacific provided data on green contracts or those that specified eco-labels.

Figure 43. Regional distribution of countries which provided data on the share of public procurement which is sustainable



### 3.7 Conclusions

Several general conclusions can be drawn from the data collected on SDG Indicator 12.7.1 in 2022:

1. Existence of policy frameworks: Globally, countries have shown strong performance in SPP policy development (sub-indicators A and B). This suggests that there is a solid groundwork and commitment to sustainable public procurement practices. All 49 countries complying with SDG Indicator 12.7.1 have at least one approved policy or legal document supporting SPP, with some countries reporting more than 10 such policies.

Consistent with global findings from 2020, the legal frameworks of countries compliant with SDG indicator 12.7.1 most commonly allow for the integration of sustainability considerations in the 'requirement definitions' and 'evaluation and selection' stages of the procurement cycle. It was less common for them to allow the application of sustainability criteria in the 'pre-qualification/qualification' stage and 'contract award and management' stage, particularly with reference to the integration of sustainability requirements in 'exclusion criteria' and the use of 'life cycle costing' in contract award.

2. Advancement in sustainable public procurement practices: Some progress has been observed in the application of sustainable public procurement practices. Specifically, the requirement for public procurement of more sustainable goods and services has increased from 67% (22 countries) in 2020 to 76% (37 countries) in 2022. This positive trend is particularly pronounced in Europe, where countries are actively transposing the European Union Clean Vehicles Directive into their legal frameworks.

3. Progress across all sub-indicators, with notable advances in SPP criteria development: While progress has been observed across all sub-indicators, sub-indicator D (sustainability criteria) stands out with the greatest advancement. Although the proportion of countries with sustainability criteria remains consistent with the 2020 data (90%), there is a notable increase in the number of countries developing criteria for 10 or more product categories, indicating an expansion of sustainability criteria into new product groups. There remains a continued emphasis on addressing readily achievable areas, such as office electronics, paper products, cleaning products, and furniture, although growth has been observed in the formulation of criteria for electricity acquisition and renewable energy.

Furthermore, a significant proportion (90%) of compliant countries have implemented policies that address various socio-economic and governance-related concerns in procurement processes, marking a slight increase from the 85% reported in 2020. Additionally, more countries now address five or more of these concerns, while conversely, fewer countries (17 or 39%) focus on addressing only 1 to 4 concerns, which represents a decline from the 79% reported in 2020.

4. Continued challenges in implementation and monitoring: There is room for improvement in measures supporting SPP implementation (sub-indicator C) and monitoring (sub-indicators E and F). These areas exhibit weaker performance, signifying that while policies are in place, practical application and oversight require enhancement. SPP guidelines and criteria remain the most common measure to support SPP implementation, with fewer countries having an SPP helpdesk, disseminating 'SPP best practices or case studies,' or offering 'SPP awards or incentives.'

There has been modest progress in monitoring and evaluating SPP at both the global and regional levels. The most widely monitored aspect of SPP is its institutionalization, with 73% of countries (36) actively monitoring the implementation of their SPP policies or action plans. This marks a notable increase

compared to the 64% (21 countries) reported in 2020. Additionally, the majority of countries (63% or 31 countries) measure SPP outputs, such as the number or value of contracts awarded, with a marginal increase since 2020 (60% or 20 countries). However, only 33% of countries were able to provide aggregate data on these outputs in sub-indicator F (percentage of public procurement which is sustainable). Some progress has been noted in measuring SPP outcomes, with an increase from 15% (5 countries) in 2020 to 20% (10 countries) in 2022. Nonetheless, it is clear that measuring these outcomes remains a complex task, and progress in this area will require a more standardized approach.

*5. Regional disparities, but progress across all regions:* While all regions have made significant progress across most sub-indicators, regional comparisons reveal significant variation in performance. Europe stands out as a leader in SPP, achieving the highest median scores across most sub-indicators due to the European Union's longstanding efforts in SPP policy implementation. Northern America and the Asia Pacific also demonstrate robust overall performance. Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa and Western Asia lead in the development of social criteria for SPP implementation.

In summary, while countries have established a strong foundation for SPP through policy development, there is a need for increased efforts in implementing and monitoring these policies effectively. Regional variations exist, with Europe leading the way, but overall progress and commitment to sustainable public procurement are evident across the globe. Addressing the challenges in implementation and monitoring will be crucial to realizing the full potential of sustainable procurement practices.

## Chapter 4: Reflections and lessons learned

Following the completion of the second data collection exercise on SDG Indicator 12.7.1, a [survey](#) was initiated to gather feedback on the data collection process and evaluation framework. The survey was disseminated to the 67 national/federal governments that had reported on the indicator in 2022, resulting in 24 responses. This Chapter provides a summary of the survey findings and reflects on the lessons learned from the second data collection exercise on the indicator.

### 4.1 Feedback from participating countries

The Excel questionnaire was regarded as 'easy to use' by the majority of survey respondents (83%), with 50% finding it 'easy to use' and 33% considering it 'somewhat easy to use.' Nearly all respondents (97%) found the questionnaire guidelines to be 'very helpful' (50%) or 'somewhat helpful' (47%). Some respondents suggested that including sample answers for each question in future iterations could be beneficial. Training sessions were deemed 'very helpful' by 79% of respondents (46%), and 'somewhat helpful' by 33%. Some respondents recommended that future training sessions provide countries with opportunities to share their experiences and showcase best practices in data collection. Others emphasized the value of using case studies as examples.

When asked about the main challenges encountered in data reporting, most respondents emphasized the 'difficulty in providing data/evidence' (58%) and the 'coordination of data collection' (50%). These aspects closely aligned with some of the recommendations, which included additional time and the adoption of a web-based application for data reporting allowing for simultaneous responses from multiple respondents.

A large proportion of the respondents (86%) indicated that the evaluation framework provided an 'accurate' (63%) or 'somewhat accurate' (33%) assessment of their country's level of SPP implementation. Some respondents pointed out that the assessment focuses on the national level and does not consider other levels of government, potentially compromising the appraisal of overall SPP implementation. Concerns were raised about the scoring system, particularly the practice of assigning a 0 or 1 to sub-indicator A, which nullifies responses to sub-indicators B-F if a 0 is received. Additionally, there were calls to give proper weight to impactful areas of SPP, such as construction and ICT, referenced in sub-indicator D.

Regarding the clarity of questions, a significant proportion of respondents (63%) reported having no difficulty in understanding questions pertaining to sub-indicators A and B (legal framework), as well as C (practical support). Moreover, 76% of respondents understood the questions related to sub-indicator E (monitoring and evaluation). Some of the questions that were reported as more challenging to understand included:

- B4 (*Does the legal and regulatory framework allow for sustainability requirements be specified as exclusion criteria?*),
- B7 (*Does the legal and regulatory framework allow for sustainability requirements be specified in contract performance clauses?*),
- C5 (*Does the national government encourage SPP best practices and achievements through awards and/or incentives?*), and
- C6 (*Is an SPP helpdesk available for procurement practitioners?*).

Question B4 was viewed by many as analogous to B3 (*Does the legal and regulatory framework allow for sustainability requirements to be specified as pre-qualification/selection criteria?*), although it specifically inquired about the exclusion of suppliers in violation of environmental or social laws or standards.

Question B7 was often misunderstood, as respondents believed their procurement regulations allowed for these requirements even when not expressly articulated,

The term “incentive” in Question C5 occasionally led to misinterpretation, implying incentives aimed at procurement authorities, whereas some respondents understood it as meaning additional evaluation points for contract awards.

Many countries which did not have dedicated SPP helpdesks found it difficult to provide evidence for Question C6, as helpdesk services are often delivered to procurement practitioners by staff that has another function within government.

With regards to the product/service categories included in sub-indicator Da (environmental criteria), the majority of respondents (75%) reported that these categories accurately reflected (46%) or ‘somewhat’ reflected (29%) the product/service categories for which their countries had developed SPP criteria. A few respondents suggested the inclusion of the following categories: tax free renewable energy and energy efficiency products, charging stations for electric vehicles, recreational and sports infrastructure, and lumber and wood products. A similar proportion of respondents (81%) found the socio-economic considerations provided in sub-indicator Db accurately reflected (59%) or ‘somewhat’ reflected (23%) their countries’ socio-economic criteria, although one respondent suggested the inclusion of the promotion of small-scale farming as a consideration, while another proposed support for SMEs from regions of lower socio-economic development.

## 4.2 Reflection on lessons learned

### *Data collection process*

While the outreach efforts in 2022 to nominate SPP focal points were largely successful, mainly due to the assistance provided by the UN Statistics Division in supplying SDG focal point contacts within government statistics bureaus, there were some notable outcomes. Of the SDG focal points contacted, only 59% designated SPP focal points for SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting, and among those, a participation rate of 65% (67 countries) was observed. Interestingly, except for Canada, Germany, Israel, Panama, and the United Kingdom, many of the countries that had initially nominated SPP focal points within their statistics bureaus either did not participate in data reporting or did not provide sufficient evidence in their reports to comply with the indicator's requirements. This highlights the importance of appointing SPP focal points within government ministries or agencies responsible for SPP implementation at the national level, particularly those overseeing financial, economic, or environmental affairs. Furthermore, the complexity of SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting and the cross-cutting nature of SPP were evident, as over one-fifth of the countries appointed focal points from multiple government entities, leading to numerous government contacts being involved in 12.7.1 communications as time progressed.

### *Robustness of the evaluation framework*

The evaluation framework aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of a national/federal government’s level of SPP implementation, however, the effectiveness of this framework hinges on the quality of the data provided. As detailed in Chapter 2, all responses needed to be substantiated with evidence and explanations. Given that some countries did not provide sufficient evidence or details to support their

responses,<sup>51</sup> their self-assessment scores were adjusted. In fact, only 6 out of the 67 participating countries maintained the same score as the one that was initially auto calculated, while 25 countries had overestimated their scores by 10 points. This highlights not only the critical importance of accurate data and appropriate evidence in yielding an accurate assessment of a country's level of SPP implementation, but also the necessity for further clarity concerning the questions at hand (in particular those highlighted by survey respondents in the previous section) and adequate training on the level of detail required in answering questions.

Several concerns have emerged regarding the clarity of certain sub-indicator questions and the required supporting evidence. Regarding sub-indicator B, an issue that emerged was the distinction between what is permitted by law and what is specifically articulated within the legal framework. Points were solely allocated in those instances where the sustainability requirements were explicitly stated in the law. Nevertheless, certain countries substantiated their responses by offering case studies and/or references to other provisions within the legal code as explanatory evidence. Given that the questions pertaining to sub-indicator B have been modeled largely on the EU's public procurement directive, as a best practice, such issues often surfaced for other regions. Moving forward, it will be important to determine to what extent additional evidence can be considered (if at all) to support responses for this sub-indicator.

The challenges related to sub-indicator C have been succinctly outlined in the preceding section, encompassing feedback received from participating countries. In addition to these challenges, there was a degree of confusion concerning the acceptable forms of evidence that could be presented in support of C.2 (*Are specific communication channels used to provide information or tools to procurement practitioners, at least twice a year?*). While several countries shared links to their government's SPP web page, this was deemed insufficient if there was no evidence of regular updates on the website. Furthermore, with respect to C.4 (*Are best practices or case studies (at least 3) shared with procurement practitioners?*), the supporting evidence varied, with some participants offering links to case studies accessible on government SPP websites, while others referred to studies or presentations incorporating such best practices, which were generally not accepted as valid evidence.

While sub-indicator Da (environmental criteria) was generally understood by participating countries, it's worth noting that some countries provided as evidence criteria that had been issued over a decade ago. As a standard practice, UNEP only accepted criteria that had been issued within the last 5 years ago, although in the future this general cut-off could potentially be adjusted on a per product category basis, particularly for products such as ICT that might necessitate more frequent criteria updates. Any such changes would need to be clearly communicated to countries. Additionally, for certain Asian countries, which rely on lists of eco-labeled products as evidence of green criteria, the date of issuance of the product criteria is not always evident. Another issue that will need to be addressed pertained to countries listing the prohibition of specific products (such as plastics) as evidence of meeting sustainability criteria.

Regarding sub-indicator Db, which relates to socio-economic criteria, certain listed considerations exhibited redundancy, as countries relied on the same legal text to substantiate their responses. This was notably evident in the case of 'Promoting compliance with ILO standards and decent work' and 'Protecting against human rights abuses (for example, discrimination, unsafe working conditions child labour, forced labour,

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<sup>51</sup> For example, not providing evidence, providing evidence that was vague or not relevant to the question, providing links that did not work, or links to web sites where the evidence could not be found, etc. Such issues were flagged by UNEP in the first review of the questionnaires and countries were given an opportunity to respond to these issues with new data and evidence.

and human trafficking.’ Furthermore, several countries utilized the implementation of e-procurement systems as evidence of addressing 'Enhancing transparency and accountability while combatting corruption.' However, in these instances, UNEP only awarded points if the legal text explicitly referred to "corruption." The ability to provide evidence of 'Promoting fair trade' was limited, with only a few countries managing to do so. Notably, variations in the interpretation of 'fair trade' arose; for instance, some countries occasionally cited trade preference programs involving specific regions or countries as their manifestation of this criterion.

For sub-indicator E, several countries presented evidence of their intention to establish monitoring and evaluation systems. However, points were exclusively granted for demonstrating active monitoring, such as through the submission of reports. Only a limited number of countries defined explicit targets, and in certain cases, these targets were not specifically oriented towards procurement but rather encompassed the government as a whole.

Regarding sub-indicator F, a limited number of countries were able to furnish data, and in numerous cases, the provided data lacked corroborating evidence due to its confinement within a specific internal information platform. However, it's important to note that in such situations, the data was deemed acceptable as long as the categories aligned with those listed in sub-indicator D.

### 4.3 Moving forward

The United Nations Environment Programme is committed to improving the SDG Indicator 12.7.1 evaluation framework, guidelines and training initiatives, addressing the concerns highlighted in the preceding sections. Furthermore, the organization is taking proactive steps to enhance the data collection process. This involves a comprehensive transition of the questionnaire into an online format set for implementation in 2024, as illustrated in Figure 44. The move towards online data collection is strategically aimed at streamlining and improving the efficiency of the reporting process. It is anticipated that this transformation will result in a more user-friendly and accessible platform for participating countries. Additionally, it will simplify the compilation, analysis, and interpretation of the gathered data, ultimately contributing to a more effective and efficient reporting system.

Figure 44. SDG Indicator 12.7.1 reporting draft wireframe





Annex 1: List of participating countries, focal point entities and contacts

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