

medicines for europe
better access. better health.

EU Public Procurement

Communications & Policy Toolkit

2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Medicines procurement must secure supply, not only price **2**
Why medicines need sector-specific procurement guidance? **3**
Why does procurement design matter? **3**
1. Procurement choices affect competition 3
2. Multi-winner tenders help preserve competition 4
3. Single-winner tendering is still the norm 4
4. Lowest price is not always lower cost 4
5. Value should mean more than price 5
6. Resilience starts in tender design 5
What award criteria should be included? **5**
A. Resilience criteria 5
B. Environmental criteria 6
C. Product-specific criteria 6
Policy toolkit **6**
EU Policy: 6
External reports on procurement: 7
Internal reports including procurement: 7
Figures 7

Medicines procurement must secure supply, not only price

Public procurement is one of the main market instruments shaping access to off-patent medicines in Europe. Unlike many other sectors, public health systems are the industry's primary customers and payers. Around 40% of medicines purchases in Europe are made through procurement and, in many countries, procurement accounts for almost all medicines purchased through the hospital channel.[1] Off-patent medicines account for a large share of treatments dispensed across Europe, representing around 70% of dispensed medicines[2].

How tenders are designed therefore has a significant impact on competition, investment decisions, and security of supply as it influences production planning and supply-chain organisation. Medicines tenders still too often reward the lowest price rather than the best value for patients and health systems. This can deliver short-term savings, but in the long-term it also reduces supplier participation, increases dependence on one provider and make supply chains more vulnerable. It can also affect the competitiveness of the off-patent medicines industry and the attractiveness of Europe as a location for pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Medicines for Europe is asking for:

- Sector-specific EU guidance for medicines procurement
- Wider use of multi-winner models to preserve competition
- A common framework for applying MEAT criteria to reduce fragmentation across Europe
- Award criteria that give real weight to supply chain reliability, resilience, sustainability
- More predictable volumes and realistic lead times to facilitate manufacturing planning

[1] IQVIA Institute, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe (2022) - **link**

[2] Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply (2026) - **link**



Why medicines need sector-specific procurement guidance?

Medicines procurement remains fragmented across Europe, with national, regional, hospital-level and group purchasing systems often operating side by side.

This fragmentation makes it harder for buyers to apply supply chain reliability, resilience, and sustainability consistently, while divergent requirements also create complexity and uncertainty for suppliers operating across European markets.

Sector-specific EU guidance would help contracting authorities use existing legal tools with more confidence, while keeping procurement transparent, proportionate and competitive. A common framework for applying MEAT criteria would also help reduce fragmentation and support greater consistency across Europe.

Why does procurement design matter?

1. Procurement choices affect competition

Tender design shapes medicines markets. It influences how many suppliers compete, how volumes are distributed and whether companies can remain active in the market. Procurement decisions influence competition well beyond the award of an individual contract. They can either support a diversified supplier base or contribute to a market in which fewer companies are able or willing to compete.

2. Multi-winner tenders help preserve competition

Multi-winner tenders can support diversification of suppliers and reduce market concentration. Volumes are shared across two or three suppliers, possibly allocating predefined shares (for example 50%/30%/ 20%)[3]. This already happens in several European procurement systems, including Greece, Portugal and Norway for generic medicines, and Italy for biosimilar medicines.



3. Single-winner tendering is still the norm

Awarding all volumes to one supplier can increase dependency and expose the system to disruption. Single-winner tendering remains the most common approach in Europe, used in around 74% of countries (20 out of 27)[4]. In a market where supply is already highly concentrated, this risk is even greater, as 46% of EU critical medicines have only one supplier. For 83% of critical medicines, a single supplier accounts for more than 60% of the market[5].

4. Lowest price is not always lower cost

A tender focused only on the cheapest offer can create hidden risks for the health system, such as fewer bidders, lower supply flexibility and greater exposure to shortages. According to the European Commission, 62% of medicine procurement tenders rely mainly on price-only criteria.[6]

[3] Medicines for Europe, Position Paper: Revision of EU rules on public procurement: Strengthening EU resilience through sector-specific procurement guidance for pharmaceuticals (2026) – link

[4] Medicines for Europe, 2025 Generics Market Review - Key Findings (2025) - link

[5] Teva, Generics Health Check: European Critical Medicines Supply Diversity Under Pressure (2025) – link

[6] European Commission: Study on Best Practices in the Public Procurement of Medicines (2022) - link

5. Value should mean more than price

MEAT criteria allow contracting authorities to assess the broader value of a medicine tender, not only the lowest price. They should give real weight to supply chain reliability, resilience, sustainability and product-specific characteristics as bonus criteria, while ensuring fair competition[7].

6. Resilience starts in tender design

Security of supply is built into tender design before a shortage happens. Predictable volumes, realistic lead times and appropriate contract duration give companies the visibility needed to plan production and maintain supply. Very often, tenders have less than 60 days of lead time, which is not appropriate to accommodate for realities of pharmaceutical manufacturing.

The minimum lead time needed for a manufacturer to supply a generic medicine is around six months, whereas the manufacturing lead time for biosimilar medicines is approximately 12 months. Complex generic and value-added medicines may also require longer timelines due to their complex manufacturing processes.

What award criteria should be included?

Award criteria should help buyers recognise value beyond the lowest price. In medicines procurement, these include resilience, environmental and product-specific criteria, provided they are objective, proportionate and used as award or bonus criteria rather than automatic exclusion requirements.

A. Resilience criteria

Tenders can give value to suppliers that demonstrate credible supply preparedness. Where procurement measures seek to support European production, they should remain consistent with the EU's obligations towards strategic partners. Examples may include:

- a proven supply track record
- a dedicated local contact point for supply-related issues
- a mitigation plan for supply disruptions
- inventory policies for finished products or key starting materials
- the ability to reallocate stock from other EU countries where appropriate

[7] Medicines for Europe, Medicines Procurement Reform: Strengthening Supply Security through EU Guidance (2024) - **link**

B. Environmental criteria

Environmental criteria should be practical and based on measurable information at company level. Examples may include:

- public climate disclosure
- GHG reduction targets
- participation in recognised sustainability initiatives
- waste reduction or recycling commitments
- responsible water management
- for antibiotics, adherence to responsible manufacturing standards aimed at reducing environmental risks linked to AMR

C. Product-specific criteria

Where relevant, tenders can award bonus points for product features that bring practical value for patients, healthcare professionals or logistics. Examples may include:

- expiry date
- packaging format such as unit dose
- storage conditions
- ease of handling or reduced need for reconstitution[8].

Policy toolkit

EU Policy:

Positions

✓ Medicines for Europe, Position Paper: Revision of EU rules on public procurement: Strengthening EU resilience through sector-specific procurement guidance for pharmaceuticals (2026) - **here**

Factsheets

✓ Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply (2026) - **here**

✓ Medicines for Europe, Medicines Procurement Reform: Strengthening Supply Security through EU Guidance (2024) - **here**

[8] Medicines for Europe, Medicines Procurement Reform: Strengthening Supply Security through EU Guidance (2024) - **link**

External reports on procurement:

EU Institutions

- ✓ European Commission: Study on Best Practices in the Public Procurement of Medicines (2022) - **here**
- ✓ European Court of Auditors: Less competition for contracts awarded for works, goods and services in the 10 years up to 2021 (2023) - **here**
- ✓ European Commission: Staff Working Document – Evaluation of Directive 2014/23/EU on Concessions, Directive 2014/24/EU on Public Procurement and Directive 2014/25/EU on Utilities (2024) - **here**
- ✓ European Commission, Communication on Medicines Shortages in the EU (2023) - **here**

Others

- ✓ IQVIA Institute: The Impact of Biosimilar Competition in Europe (2026) - **here**
- ✓ IQVIA Institute, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe (2022)- **here**
- ✓ Teva, Generics Health Check: European Critical Medicines Supply Diversity Under Pressure (2025) – **here**

Internal reports including procurement:

- ✓ Medicines for Europe, 2025 Market Review – Generic Medicines Markets - **here**
- ✓ Medicines for Europe, 2025 Market Review - Biosimilar Medicines - **here**
- ✓ Medicines for Europe, 2025 Generics Market Review - Key Findings - **here**
- ✓ Medicines for Europe, 2025 Biosimilars Market Review - Key Findings - **here**
- ✓ Medicines for Europe, 2025 Webinar Market Access Reviews – Key Findings - **here**

Figures

- ✓ Tendering accounts for around 40% of drug purchases in Europe, while the remaining 60% go through other channels (IQVIA, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ 62% of medicine procurement procedures rely primarily on price-only criteria. (European Commission: Study on Best Practices in the Public Procurement of Medicines, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ Up to 84% of procurement procedures follow price-only criteria for antineoplastic agents/cancer medicines. (European Commission: Study on Best Practices in the Public Procurement of Medicines, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ Up to 74% of countries report single-winner tenders (20 out of 27 countries). (Medicines for Europe, 2025 Market Review – Generic Medicines Markets, 2025) - **here**

- ✓ Up to 83% of medicines tenders are organised at hospital or group-of-hospital level. (Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply, 2026) - **here**
- ✓ The share of awards based on the Most Economically Advantageous Tender decreased from 70% in 2006–2010 to 63% in 2017–2024 across all sectors (not specific to pharmaceutical tenders) (European Commission: Staff Working Document – Evaluation of Directive 2014/23/EU on Concessions, Directive 2014/24/EU on Public Procurement and Directive 2014/25/EU on Utilities, 2025) - **here**
- ✓ 46% of EU critical medicines have only one supplier in the market. For 83% of critical medicines, one supplier accounts for more than 60% of the market. (Teva, Generics Health Check: European Critical Medicines Supply Diversity Under Pressure, 2025) – **here**
- ✓ In 69% of countries, there are no minimum or maximum quantities foreseen in tenders. (Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply, 2026) - **here**
- ✓ Lead times are often less than 60 days. (Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply, 2026) - **here**
- ✓ The minimum lead time needed for a manufacturer to supply a generic medicine is around six months. (Medicines for Europe, Public Procurement Directive Factsheet: A reform of EU public procurement rules is necessary to support the resilience of medicines supply, 2026) - **here**
- ✓ Depending on the country, tenders account for 80% to 100% of drug purchases made by hospitals. (IQVIA, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ The hospital market accounts for close to 50% of the European pharmaceutical market by value. (IQVIA, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ The most common tender duration in Europe ranges from 13 to 24 months. (IQVIA, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe, 2022) - **here**
- ✓ Inefficient tender management can lock companies into unprofitable agreements or effectively exclude them from business for 24 to 36 months, depending on tender duration. (IQVIA, From Regulated Prices to Prices Set in Tenders: Tendering Landscape in Europe, 2022) - **here**



medicines for europe
better access. better health.

Medicines for Europe
Rue d'Arlon 50 - 1000 Brussels - Belgium
T: +32 (0)2 736 84 11 - F: +32 (0)2 736 74 38
info@medicinesforeurope.com
www.medicinesforeurope.com

www.medicinesforeurope.com