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Issue of establishing socially responsible public procurement of tactical equipment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the specific feature of legal regulation of socially oriented public procurement with a focus on tactical equipment. The study comprehensively analysed the current legislation and identified key shortcomings, specifically the lack of mechanisms for the implementation of socially responsible criteria in the public procurement process. It was found that the focus on the lowest price in tenders hinders the assurance of product quality and social labour standards. The study also covered an analysis of international practices, including European Union legislation, specifically Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, which could be adapted in Ukraine. The study found that Ukraine faces a series of challenges related to socially responsible public procurement, particularly of tactical equipment. Procurement procedures, specifically for body armour, require substantial changes to improve efficiency and reduce corruption risks. One of the key problems is the lengthy procedures, which do not meet the needs of urgent deliveries for the military. As a result, instead of using public procurement, many unit commanders and volunteers turn to charitable organisations or private suppliers, leading to unauthorised deliveries and fraud. The study

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also analysed the practices of the United States and Finland in socially responsible procurement of tactical equipment. In Finland, public procurement includes environmental and social criteria for selecting suppliers, which ensures high quality standards and promotes the sustainable development of local production. Analysis of the US practices showed the significance of supporting local suppliers through programmes such as the Federal Acquisition Regulation, which encourages small businesses and suppliers and gives preference to domestic goods in federal procurement. The findings of the study indicated the necessity of simplifying procurement procedures. This would markedly improve the efficiency of public resource use, reduce corruption risks, and ensure the quality of tactical equipment supplies for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Keywords: military operations; personal protective equipment; bulletproof vest; tender documentation; decent working conditions

Introduction

The development of socially responsible public procurement is a major area of public administration, especially in the context of ensuring national security and socio-economic development. This issue is particularly relevant in the procurement of tactical equipment, including personal protective equipment and other items necessary for the effective performance of tasks by the military and other specialised units. In the context of modern challenges related to military actions and economic instability, improving public procurement mechanisms should be a priority.

The problem addressed in this study is the insufficient consideration of social aspects in the current Ukrainian legislation regulating public procurement. The primary emphasis in regulations is placed on economic criteria, specifically cost minimisation, which limits the possibilities for a comprehensive assessment of procurement processes. Furthermore, the issue of ensuring adequate working conditions at enterprises producing tactical equipment is still unaddressed, despite its direct influence on product quality and the competitiveness of domestic producers. A separate problem is the lack of clear mechanisms to stimulate the development of Ukrainian production, which creates unequal conditions for

national enterprises to take part in tender procedures and contributes to the dominance of imported products on the internal market.

The issue of socially responsible public procurement is being actively researched at the international level. B.K. Gidigah *et al.* (2022) analysed socio-economic policy in the field of public procurement in Ghana, focusing specifically on the lack of a clear definition of the term 'social value' and its integration as an evaluation criterion in legislation. L. Ankersmit (2020) analysed the limitations of EU legislation in the field of public procurement, which, despite the possibility of taking environmental and social aspects into account, does not allow for the effective use of procurement to promote corporate social responsibility policies. J.L. Fuentes-Bargues *et al.* (2021) focused on analysing the use of social criteria in public tenders for public works in the Valencia region of Spain. The researchers found that social criteria are considered in less than 12% of tenders, which is low compared to other countries. The implementation of socially responsible procurement mechanisms was also the subject of a study by S. Lonsdale and N. le Mesurier (2024). The researchers examined the practices of some English public authorities that

made great strides in the development of socially responsible public procurement, particularly through the appointment of responsible persons, the creation of specialised groups, the introduction of training, etc. The significance of internal political skills in overcoming resistance to the current procurement logic was also emphasised. K. Selviaridis *et al.* (2023) also explored the issue of socially responsible public procurement in the United Kingdom. The researchers analysed the strategic use of public procurement to create social value. Based on case studies from the UK public sector (metropolitan councils and hospitals), the researchers examined socially oriented procurement strategies, inter-organisational structures, supplier management, and capacity building and performance assessment measures.

In Ukraine, research on this topic is still fragmented. Public procurement legislation is focused on the achievement of economic goals, but issues of social responsibility, particularly working conditions, continue to be underdeveloped. V. Malolitneva (2021) focused her study on strengthening public law principles in the legal regulation of public procurement, particularly in the context of adapting Ukrainian legislation to EU standards and implementing sustainable development goals. The researcher analysed the effects of green and socially responsible procurement on the competitiveness of countries and the need for harmonisation with international standards. Author proposed ways to develop green and social procurement in Ukraine, specifically through the introduction of strategic planning in this area. V. Dresvyannikova and V.V. Grigorieva (2022) also explored the evolution of the national public procurement mechanism in Ukraine, particularly in the context of the challenges of martial law and increased spending on defence and social support. The researchers analysed the role of public procurement in stabilising the economy during the war and its significance

for the country's post-war recovery. The focus was on finding ways to improve the procurement system to facilitate both infrastructure recovery and socio-economic development in Ukraine. O.P. Svitlychnyi *et al.* (2023) also covered this subject. Their study analysed the specific features of public procurement in Ukraine during martial law, specifically its regulatory framework and practical implementation. Special attention was paid to simplified procurement algorithms that allow bypassing open tenders and electronic catalogues under certain circumstances.

Analysis of scientific studies on public procurement revealed a series of significant aspects that were still understudied in the context of developing socially responsible public procurement of tactical equipment. Specifically, many researchers considered general approaches to socially responsible procurement, including the integration of social criteria, environmental aspects and the promotion of corporate social responsibility, but the focus was mainly on civilian sectors such as construction, education, or healthcare. Issues related to the specificities of procurement in the defence sector, particularly tactical equipment, continue to be unexplored. Furthermore, despite growing interest in the introduction of social and environmental standards in public procurement, there is a lack of detailed studies analysing working conditions in companies producing tactical equipment and their impact on product quality. There is no comprehensive approach to studying mechanisms for stimulating domestic producers of this specific type of product, which is crucial for the country's defence capability.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the problems of legislative regulation of socially responsible public procurement, using tactical equipment as an example. To fulfil the purpose of the study, the following tasks were set: to analyse the current legislation of Ukraine in the field of public procurement, specifically regarding social

responsibility; to identify the key problems and gaps in the regulatory framework that affect the provision of adequate working conditions at manufacturing enterprises and the competitiveness of national products; to develop recommendations for improving legal mechanisms to support socially responsible procurement and stimulate domestic production of tactical equipment.

Materials and Methods

To achieve the research objectives, several approaches and methods were employed to comprehensively analyse the issue of socially responsible public procurement of tactical equipment in Ukraine and abroad. The first stage of the study was to analyse national regulations governing public procurement procedures in Ukraine, particularly in the field of defence procurement, as this sector has a series of specific features related to the nature of its needs, security, and urgency of procurement. To this end, key regulations defining the general principles of procurement, as well as the specifics of defence procurement, were selected. The key documents included the Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII "On Public Procurement" (2015) – for understanding the general principles of organising and conducting tenders in Ukraine. Additionally, the Law of Ukraine No. 808-IX "On Defence Procurement" (2020) defined the specifics of procurement in the defence sector. Furthermore, the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 2014/24/EU (2014) was analysed at this stage to assess the possibility of considering social and environmental criteria in public procurement. The Association Agreement Between the European Union and its Member States, of the One Part, and Ukraine, of the Other Part (2014) was also reviewed, which helped to identify EU requirements for procurement. The Labour Code of Ukraine (1996) was employed to investigate the requirements for safe working conditions in enterprises, specifically

regarding the technical condition of equipment and the compliance of workplaces with hygiene standards. The Recommendations of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (2022) were also analysed to examine the procedures governing actions during air raid alerts, which is significant for enterprises operating in high-risk areas where production may be halted during an alert to ensure the safety of workers. The next stage was a comparative analysis of international practices. For comparison, legislative acts and procurement practices in the United States were explored, specifically, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (2025) (FAR) was found to contain provisions that allow supporting local producers through preferences.

The study examined data from the State Statistics Committee (2024) to examine the enterprises in high-risk and hazardous working conditions, particularly for enterprises, to understand the legal norms governing occupational safety, and to analyse the specific characteristics of enterprises operating in high-risk industries. The study also used the method of analysing public tenders on the Prozorro platform. Procurement data and technical requirements for goods, specifically body armour, were examined, and information about suppliers and the results of concrete tenders relating to personal protective equipment were studied. To confirm the results of the theoretical analysis, several case studies were conducted, including the study of cases of fraud in the supply of goods such as body armour and other personal protective equipment, as well as Finland's practices in conducting tenders.

Results

Socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) is defined as the process of purchasing goods, works, or services that factors in not only the economic criteria but also the social criteria such as environmental safety, ethical production

standards, and decent working conditions. This concept is becoming increasingly significant in European legislation, as reflected in Article 18 of Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 2014/24/EU (2014). It emphasises the obligation of public purchasers to ensure compliance with social, environmental, and

labour standards. In Ukraine, the development of SRPP is part of the process of integration into the European community, but national legislation focuses mainly on economic aspects, which creates major constraints for the implementation of social objectives. Table 1 presents the key principles of SRPP.

Table 1. Basic principles of socially responsible public procurement

Principle	Description	Implementation examples
Transparency	Provision of access to procurement information for all interested parties.	Publication of tender documentation on Prozorro
Environmental friendliness	Consideration of the impact of procurement on the environment.	Procurement of tactical equipment made from environmentally friendly materials
Ethics	Respect for workers' rights, avoidance of child labour.	Control of working conditions at manufacturing enterprises
Innovativeness	Introduction of the latest technologies to improve product quality and procurement efficiency.	Introduction of bulletproof vest tracking systems

Source: compiled by the author based on data from R. Caranta (2022)

The current legislation of Ukraine, specifically the Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII (2015) and the Law of Ukraine No. 808-IX (2020), comprehensively regulates the procedures for conducting tenders with a focus on ensuring maximum transparency and creating conditions for fair competition. Legislative norms oblige customers to adhere to the principles of openness, which includes the publication of all stages of the tender process on official platforms, such as the Prozorro system. This ensures public access to information about announced procurements, submitted bids, tender committee decisions, and concluded contracts. Transparency helps minimise corruption risks, as every market participant can get equal access to information and compete on equal terms (Williams & Andrew, 2021). However, regulations do not make provision for the mandatory consideration of social criteria, which becomes an obstacle to the development of SRPP. In the context of socially responsible public procurement, the procurement of tactical equipment requires special attention, as these

goods are of strategic significance for ensuring the country's defence capability, especially in conditions of military conflict and threats to national security. Therefore, such procurement should factor in not only quality and economic criteria, but also social, environmental, and ethical aspects (Olsson & Öjehag-Pettersson, 2020).

For the period until 2024, Ukrainian public procurement legislation does not contain clear rules obliging customers to consider socially responsible criteria when procuring tactical equipment. Specifically, aspects such as working conditions at manufacturing companies, compliance with occupational health and safety standards, or social guarantees for employees are not mandatory criteria in tender procedures. This gap creates opportunities for manufacturers who ignore social standards to gain an advantage by reducing their production costs.

For example, the Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII (2015) (Article 22) prescribes the possibility of using evaluation criteria related to the quality, environmental friendliness, or innovativeness of

goods. However, the absence of a mandatory requirement to include social criteria, such as working conditions or compliance with occupational health and safety standards, effectively leaves these aspects to the discretion of the customer. As a result, the lowest price criterion prevails, which encourages unscrupulous manufacturers to cut costs to ensure adequate working conditions.

The issue of public procurement, particularly of tactical equipment, in the context of a full-scale war is crucial for ensuring the protection of military personnel and civilians. However, the current approaches to procurement reveal a series of shortcomings that complicate the process and jeopardise the timeliness of deliveries. According to the Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII (2015), conducting a tender requires an extensive amount of time. Specifically, the preparation of tender documentation, the period for submitting bids, the auction, and the conclusion of the contract can take several weeks, which is critical in wartime. Delays in the supply of tactical equipment directly affect the safety of military personnel. Overall, if all the rules are followed, buying tactical gear can take over a month, not counting any delays from appeals.

In crises, when providing for military personnel is critical, such deadlines are unacceptable. Due to delays, unit commanders or military personnel themselves are often forced to turn to charitable organisations or volunteers to obtain the necessary equipment, such as body armour. However, although such appeals are faster, they do not guarantee protection from fraud. For example, in Kyiv, a 20-year-old man defrauded three volunteers who transferred over UAH 100,000 for the purchase of protective helmets, body armour, and armour plates (Rybalskaya, 2022). Instead of delivering the promised equipment, the fraudster disappeared with the money, according to the Kyiv City Prosecutor's Office. In another case, the director of a company in Kyiv supplied the Armed Forces with poor-quality uniforms worth

over UAH 35 million (Petrenko, 2024). Such incidents undermine confidence in alternative means of procuring equipment. Furthermore, customers include requirements that do not affect the quality of the goods or the speed of delivery, such as certificates that are not directly related to the declared product characteristics or certificates of no debt, which can be verified in automated systems. Such requirements increase the bureaucratic burden on tenderers and may reduce competition due to suppliers' refusal to take part. The lack of uniform minimum requirements for the technical characteristics of body armour creates situations where participants submit heterogeneous bids, making it difficult to select a winner. For example, options with differing levels of protection may be considered in the same tender, which affects the objectivity of the evaluation. Thus, the lack of an expedited procurement procedure in the state system creates serious risks for the prompt and high-quality provision of military equipment. The development of special mechanisms that factor in the military's needs for urgent delivery and quality standards could substantially reduce these risks and minimise dependence on volunteer assistance.

It is also essential to consider international practices, specifically EU directives that focus on the integration of social requirements into tender procedures. For example, the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 2014/24/EU (2014) prescribes the consideration of environmental and social aspects as one of the mandatory criteria. Ukraine, having embarked on a course of adapting its legislation to European standards, must factor in these requirements. The absence of such norms not only contradicts the principles of social responsibility, but also complicates the implementation of Ukraine's international commitments, particularly within the framework of the Association Agreement (2014) (Section V, Article 150). In this regard, it is advisable to amend national legislation

to make it mandatory to consider social criteria in public procurement, especially in strategic areas such as the production of tactical equipment.

Support for local suppliers is a key aspect of the development of national production, especially in the strategically significant area of tactical equipment manufacturing (Mebrate & Shumet, 2024). In the context of ongoing military aggression by the Russian Federation, Ukraine faces numerous war-related economic challenges that require the introduction of mechanisms to stimulate internal production. The procurement of tactical equipment can be one of the drivers of economic growth, contributing to the creation of new jobs, increasing state budget revenues, and reducing dependence on imported products.

Support for local suppliers will also contribute to improving the technological level of enterprises. Improving production processes, introducing the latest quality standards, and increasing the competitiveness of Ukrainian products on the international market are promising areas of development that can be implemented through responsible public procurement policies. Involving local manufacturers will make it possible to adapt products to the specific needs of military personnel, considering their real requirements for ergonomics, protective properties, and durability of equipment.

Furthermore, securing stable orders for local producers will contribute to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are often the backbone of regional economic stability (Amann *et al.*, 2014). This is significant not only for sustaining the economy in wartime, but also for laying the foundations for long-term development after the conflict ends. Specifically, the growth of Ukrainian enterprises' production capacities can contribute to the diversification of production and the expansion of the range of products that meet both military and civilian needs. Support for national producers is also of strategic significance for national security (Jain *et al.*, 2019).

The development of domestic production capabilities reduces dependence on imports, which in crises can be unreliable due to logistical or political constraints (Casady *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the localisation of tactical equipment production is not only economically viable but also critically necessary to ensure the country's defence capability.

In December 2023, the State Rear Operator ("DOT"), a procurement agency of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, began operations. It actively promotes the involvement of Ukrainian manufacturers in the supply of material assets for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Thanks to its work, 28 new Ukrainian companies have been involved in supplies, increasing the share of internal manufacturers in the total volume of contracts to over 80%. Among other orders, the agency signed a contract with a domestic manufacturer to supply chemical hand warmers, which serve as an alternative source of heat for the military. These packs contain a mixture of natural ingredients, such as salt, activated carbon, and water, which generate heat when they interact. Previously, only Chinese equivalents were supplied to the army at a significantly higher price. Replacing imported warmers with products from a Ukrainian manufacturer saved the state budget about UAH 12.5 million, while the total purchase cost was almost UAH 9 million. Increased competition among suppliers contributes to improving the quality of products for the military and reducing their cost (The procurement agency of the Ministry of Defence..., 2023). The primary goal of the agency is to effectively use state resources and provide the military with everything necessary to perform their tasks. Transparent procurement rules ensure a wider choice of suppliers, which contributes to increased competition in the market, attracts new participants, and creates favourable conditions for the introduction of innovative solutions that improve the quality of goods and services and more effectively meet the needs of customers (Melander & Arvidsson, 2020).

The Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 2014/24/EU (2014) contains provisions that allow factoring in the local economic interests. Article 18(1) prescribes the principles of public procurement, specifically non-discrimination, equal access, and proportionality. At the same time, this study allows customers to include social, environmental, or innovative requirements in procurement criteria, provided that they do not restrict competition. This can be used to support local economic interests by factoring in the socially responsible aspects. Article 67(2) defines the criteria for awarding contracts and allows contracting authorities to consider the 'most economically advantageous tender', which may include aspects such as quality, environmental characteristics, technical advantages, and social criteria. Contracting authorities may, for instance, include a requirement to create jobs in the region or to support small and medium-sized enterprises. In this way, the Directive allows factoring in the local interests through social or economic conditions, while maintaining a balance with the principles of competitiveness.

The current legislation of Ukraine does not provide effective mechanisms to support local producers in the field of defence procurement. The Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII (2015) does not provide preferences for local suppliers, except for a limited number of cases within the framework of state defence orders involving special procedures. The absence of such mechanisms puts Ukrainian enterprises at a disadvantage, as foreign companies often offer products at lower prices due to larger production volumes, the use of more modern technologies, and access to cheaper resources.

For example, Ukrainian manufacturers of tactical equipment face extensive costs for raw materials and energy, which substantially affects the cost of production. Foreign companies, particularly those from the European Union and Asia, have considerable advantages in international

competition thanks to their developed supply chains and subsidies from their governments. In EU countries such as Germany, France, and Poland, governments provide financial support to companies that produce materials for tactical equipment through defence industry support programmes such as the European Defence Fund. For instance, France's Thales Group (2024) develops tactical communication systems, while Poland's Lubawa SA manufactures textile materials for body armour and tents. In the United States, provisions on support for local suppliers in public procurement are contained in the FAR (2025), specifically: Part 19 of the FAR (Small Business Programs) requires customers to promote the participation of small businesses, businesses owned by veterans, women, and members of national minorities in public procurement. For example, according to section 19.502-2 "Total Small Business Set-Asides" (Federal Acquisition..., 2019), customers are required to give priority to local small businesses in contracts below a certain threshold. Part 25, Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. §§ 8301-8305), implemented in FAR (2025), requires that products manufactured in the United States be given preference in federal government procurement. This is reflected in FAR Section 25.1, which sets out rules for the use of domestic products and establishes criteria for identifying such products. Thus, the FAR is a comprehensive regulatory framework governing government procurement and includes provisions to support domestic suppliers.

Such conditions allow foreign companies to offer products at lower prices, which puts Ukrainian manufacturers at a disadvantage. Even if they meet international standards, domestic products cannot always compete due to the lack of analogous state support, as well as limited infrastructure and resources. This reduces the market share of Ukrainian manufacturers, creating challenges for the development of domestic production. It is advisable for Ukraine to develop amendments to

the current legislation that would provide preferences for local producers in the procurement of tactical equipment. For example, a requirement for a minimum share of local components in products could be introduced, or additional points could be awarded in tender procedures to companies that use local raw materials, create jobs, particularly for internally displaced persons, and adhere to high social standards. Such measures would not only help strengthen domestic production, but also reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, ensure the country's economic stability, and raise the level of technological development of Ukrainian enterprises in the defence industry.

Current Ukrainian legislation focuses mainly on economic aspects, such as reducing procurement costs, and does not account for social aspects, such as ensuring adequate working conditions in enterprises or supporting national producers. Legislative acts such as the Law of Ukraine No. 922-VIII (2015) and the Law of Ukraine No. 808-IX (2020) focus on formal procedures and economic efficiency. At the same time, criteria relating to working conditions, environmental responsibility, or local production continue to be poorly regulated.

At the international level, socially responsible public procurement is being actively implemented in legislation and practice. The European Union is a leader in this area. For instance, the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 2014/24/EU (2014) prescribes the consideration of social, environmental, and labour criteria in procurement. EU governments use procurement as a tool to stimulate innovative production, create jobs, and support the national economy (Grimbert *et al.*, 2024). This experience is valuable for Ukraine, as it allows adapting the best practices to local conditions.

The issue of working conditions in companies producing tactical equipment is critical in the context of developing socially responsible public

procurement. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, a significant proportion of employees in national enterprises, especially in high-risk sectors, face hazardous working conditions. For example, in 2023, over 20% of workers at such enterprises worked in conditions that exceeded hygiene standards, creating additional risks to their health and productivity (State Statistics Committee, 2024). According to Article 153 of the Labour Code of Ukraine (1996), employers are obliged to ensure safe working conditions, including the technical condition of equipment, and the compliance of workplaces with hygiene standards. However, these requirements are often not met due to financial difficulties or a lack of proper control. Modernising these enterprises and following social standards are significant steps towards improving their competitiveness. This also strengthens confidence in the products they supply for defence purposes and contributes to the creation of jobs with decent working conditions. One way to address this issue is to integrate requirements for compliance with occupational health and safety standards into public procurement criteria, which could positively affect the development of the sector (Demircioglu & Vivona, 2021). Companies, particularly those involved in the production of tactical equipment, face additional risks due to constant air raid alerts resulting from the military aggression against Ukraine. In such conditions, employees are forced to stop the production process and move to shelters, which considerably complicates the work of enterprises. This not only reduces productivity but also creates additional psychological stress on employees. According to the recommendations of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (2022), during an air raid alert, all citizens, including employees of enterprises, must immediately proceed to the nearest shelters. This process affects production cycles, especially in industries where continuity of work is required to fulfil government contracts.

To address these issues, comprehensive measures must be implemented at the legislative and management levels. Social criteria must be integrated into national public procurement legislation. These could include requirements to follow labour standards, create safe working conditions, and involve internally displaced persons in the workforce. Additionally, international practices, specifically European Union practices, should be adapted to Ukrainian context. This will ensure the harmonisation of national standards with international standards and promote investment in this area. For instance, in Finland, environmental friendliness of production became a key condition

for the procurement of military uniforms in 2021. The tender documentation required confirmation of compliance with ISO 14001 (environmental management) and SA8000 (social responsibility) standards (Police of Finland, 2022). This ensured that production did not harm the environment and respected workers' rights. Unlike Ukraine, where price is currently the key criterion, this practice ensures long-term social benefits. Table 2 compares the characteristics of tactical equipment according to socially responsible procurement criteria, including environmental friendliness of production, working conditions, and compliance with international social responsibility standards.

Table 2. Comparison of tactical equipment characteristics based on socially responsible procurement criteria

Criterion	Made in Ukraine	Made in EU
Environmental friendliness of materials	Use of locally sourced materials with eco-certificates	High level of environmental friendliness (ISO 14001 standard)
Social working conditions	Compliance with the Labour Code of Ukraine	Compliance with ILO standards
Product quality	Average level (minimum requirements met)	High level (European quality standards implemented)
Product cost	Moderate	High
Warranty period	1 year	3 years
Service availability	Availability of local service centres	Support through distributors

Source: developed by the author based on A. Semple (2017) and J. Bryson and B. George (2020)

Another prominent area is stimulating the development of domestic production. For example, a system of preferences for Ukrainian manufacturers could be introduced in the tendering process, encouraging them to take part in public procurement through state subsidies or tax relief. Furthermore, it is essential to create conditions for the modernisation of production facilities and the introduction of innovations in the production of tactical equipment (Manta *et al.*, 2022). Such tenders would become a tool for stimulating the economy, contributing to the creation of new jobs. To take part, companies would have to ensure compliance with national labour standards and product specifications.

The implementation of these measures requires enhanced interagency cooperation, specifically between government authorities, regulatory bodies, civil society organisations and businesses. This will ensure the effective implementation of socially responsible procurement policies and stimulate economic development. Socially responsible procurement aims not only to meet basic product needs, but also to create additional value for society, such as compliance with environmental, social, and ethical standards (Klein *et al.*, 2022). Ukraine also has experience in socially responsible public procurement, for instance, through the involvement of companies that employ internally displaced persons, but this

does not apply to tactical equipment. In 2023, goods manufactured by companies employing internally displaced persons were actually purchased through the Prozorro platform. For example: Purchase of food packages for internally displaced persons. The Executive Committee of the Mariupol City Council made purchases worth over UAH 69 million to provide displaced persons with food packages (Tender of the Executive Committee of the Mariupol City Council No. UA-2023-12-20-024744-a, 2023). This approach helped not only to provide humanitarian aid, but also to support enterprises that were actively involved in solving social problems during challenging times. Arrangement of temporary accommodation for displaced persons. The Shyrokyivska Village Council in the Zaporizhzhia region organised the purchase of goods for the refurbishment of premises intended for the accommodation of internally displaced persons (Tender of the Shyrokyivska Village Council of the Zaporizhzhia District of the Zaporizhzhia Region No. UA-2023-08-19-000250-a, 2023). This initiative had both a social and economic impact, supporting local producers and contractors. These examples illustrate a socially responsible approach to public procurement aimed at supporting the economy and addressing social issues in times of crisis. They can serve as a model for developing analogous approaches to the procurement of tactical equipment.

Based on the results of the study, to improve socially responsible public procurement of tactical equipment, comprehensive changes must be made to procurement procedures to make the process more efficient, transparent, and conducive to attracting more suppliers. The key areas for improvement include reducing the time needed to prepare tender documentation. Both customers and tenderers face a lengthy and laborious process of preparing documentation. Simplifying requirements, automating the process of collecting information from open registers, and reducing the

amount of unnecessary information would markedly expedite this stage. For example, the introduction of electronic templates for standard tenders would save a lot of time. The next step could be the standardisation of technical specifications. For the period up to 2023, requirements for tactical equipment (e.g., body armour) are often inconsistent or overly detailed (State procurement of individual..., 2023). To avoid confusion, unified minimum standards based on DSTU or international standards (e.g., NIJ) should be developed. This includes a clear definition of protection classes, maximum permissible weight, service life, and ergonomics. Such standards will not only ensure transparency but also enable customers to receive high-quality offers. It is also necessary to simplify the requirements for tender offers. Tender participants request documents that have no direct influence on the quality of the goods or the speed of their delivery. For example, references that are already available in registers or documentation relating to the structure of the enterprise are requested (Tender Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. UA-2023-09-14-014201-a, 2023). The introduction of simplified requirements for participation in tenders, the elimination of the need to provide excessive documents, and the implementation of the principle of centralised verification of information through an integrated system will greatly simplify the application process and create more accessible conditions for participants.

Optimisation of procurement procedures will help eliminate subjectivity in the evaluation of bids, as clear standards for technical specifications and tender documentation will reduce the possibility of manipulation (Torres-Pruñonosa *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, automation and the use of electronic systems such as Prozorro will ensure greater transparency and accessibility of information. Thanks to the simplification and standardisation of procedures, small and medium-sized enterprises, which often avoid procurement due to

the complexity of the process, will be able to take part in tenders. A greater number of participants will contribute to lower prices, which will allow the state to save budget funds. Overall, this approach to socially responsible procurement will not only increase its efficiency but also ensure that military personnel are provided with high-quality equipment in the shortest possible time. It will also create favourable conditions to develop domestic production, contribute to budget savings, and improve the country's defence capabilities.

Discussion

The results of the present study confirmed the significance of a socially responsible approach to public procurement of tactical equipment, which was consistent with the findings of many other researchers. Specifically, it was found that the introduction of environmental and social criteria into procurement processes not only contributes to the ethicality of production processes but also stimulates innovation in the industry. A comparison of the presented findings with international practices allows highlighting several key aspects.

The strategic use of public procurement to achieve political and social goals is a prominent topic in contemporary public administration research. J. Grandia and J. Meehan (2017) determined that public procurement can be a powerful tool for achieving socially important goals, but its implementation faces a series of challenges. Specifically, the researchers emphasise the insufficient strategic maturity of the procurement system and the difficulties in measuring its impact and success. It is worth agreeing with the conclusions of J. Grandia and J. Meehan (2017) regarding the significance of a strategic approach to public procurement management. This study also identified analogous challenges related to a weak legislative framework and a lack of institutional support. However, this study additionally focused on the integration of social and environmental

standards into procurement processes, which can contribute not only to the achievement of public goals, but also to improving product quality and creating competitive advantages for responsible producers. Together, these approaches confirm the significance of a comprehensive consideration of the strategic and practical aspects of public procurement for achieving sustainable development.

E. Uyarra *et al.* (2019) explored the concept of socially responsible procurement, focusing on the transformative nature of public policy. Their research showed that the use of tools such as the UK's Social Value Act enables local authorities to formulate requests for social and environmental innovation more effectively. Another approach to public procurement involves coordinating different actors and policy levers to create public value and address key social challenges. The results of this study suggest that the introduction of socially responsible criteria in public procurement of tactical equipment can markedly influence market development. Specifically, an emphasis on environmentally friendly production and compliance with social standards not only improves product quality but also strengthens trust in the procurement process, stimulating innovation among manufacturers. Significant barriers were identified in Ukraine, related to insufficient legislative support and limited implementation of international standards. Both studies demonstrate shared trends, such as the need to consider environmental and social factors in decision-making processes, but their results differ in scale and focus. The conclusions of this study focus on the practical application of socially responsible procurement to stimulate the local market and ensure the quality of tactical equipment, specifically body armour. At the same time, the researchers' findings emphasised the significance of integrating innovative approaches into public policy as a means of addressing global challenges. This confirms the need for a balance between global concepts and

local practices to achieve effective results. E. Uyarra *et al.* (2019) and F. Hafsa *et al.* (2022) share the same opinion. The researchers explored the role of public procurement as a tool for improving social outcomes at the global level. They emphasised that governments, as the largest buyers, can use their purchasing power to support vulnerable groups, ensure labour rights, and reduce environmental impact. Notably, both studies emphasise the significance of social responsibility in public procurement but have different focuses: this one is aimed at the sectoral level and practical implementation, while F. Hafsa *et al.* (2022) offered a broader conceptual framework for understanding social public procurement. Thus, the presented findings complement the researchers' theoretical approach by demonstrating how general principles of socially responsible procurement can be adapted to concrete conditions and sectors.

In the context of research on socially responsible procurement, it is essential to consider both the practical aspects of its implementation and the strategic challenges. K.L. Wontner *et al.* (2020) and the present study offered different perspectives on this topic, focusing on conceptual issues and practical results, respectively. The researchers examined the effects of public goods in the context of public procurement, highlighting their role in achieving positive socio-economic outcomes for local communities. At the same time, the researchers pointed to problems that may arise when implementing public goods, including tensions between distinct policies, differences in views between buyers and suppliers, and the unintended consequences of the dominance of one form of public goods over another. The findings of the present study and the cited study have shared features in their focus on the implementation of socially responsible practices in public procurement, but they consider different aspects of this issue. The findings of the present study differ from those of K.L. Wontner *et al.* (2020),

as it emphasised the positive effects of socially responsible procurement on the development of the tactical equipment market, improving product quality and creating competitive advantages for responsible companies. In contrast, the researchers analysed the conceptual challenges and systemic consequences of implementing socially responsible procurement, which may be useful for developing more comprehensive approaches to integrating socially responsible practices into the public sector. Both approaches complemented each other, highlighting both the practical and strategic aspects of the issue.

With the growing role of social aspects in public procurement, it is vital to understand the different approaches to their integration into management processes. R. Vluggen *et al.* (2020) examined the influence of factors on the implementation of social return on investment, emphasising the significance of trust between stakeholders and their representatives as a key driver of this process. At the same time, they highlighted obstacles such as administrative burdens and legislative constraints that hindered the implementation of social return on investment. The present study focused on the integration of social and environmental standards into procurement processes, particularly for tactical equipment. The study found that such initiatives not only promote ethical production but also stimulate innovation and support responsible manufacturers. The present study did not cover the issue of social return on investment as a specific tool for evaluating the effectiveness of public procurement, focusing instead on the priority of social aspects in socially responsible procurement. This study emphasised that social aspects should prevail over price factors in decision-making, especially when it comes to public procurement of tactical equipment. Together, these findings point to the need to improve mechanisms for assessing and implementing socially responsible practices through

better regulation and management processes, as well as the development of transparent and trusting relationships between all participants.

Social procurement is becoming a valuable tool for addressing social problems, but its effectiveness depends on systemic support and clear regulation. D. Troje and T. Andersson (2021) examined social procurement practices in the Swedish construction sector. The researchers found that although practices such as setting employment conditions for marginalised groups had significant potential to reduce social exclusion and unemployment, their implementation was still fragmented and insufficiently structured. Key challenges included weak incentives for internship participants, insufficient integration of social practices into organisations and projects, and weak support mechanisms for formalising sustainable practices. The present study focused on the integration of social and environmental criteria in public procurement of tactical equipment in Ukraine. It was noted that the implementation of such practices contributes to the creation of ethical and sustainable procurement processes and stimulates innovation, but faces a series of challenges, including a weak legal framework, administrative barriers, and insufficient institutional support. A comparison of these studies revealed several shared features: both studies recognised the value of social procurement as a tool for addressing social problems. They also highlighted the lack of institutional support and weak implementation mechanisms as key obstacles. However, the present study focused more on the integration of environmental and social standards into Ukrainian legislation, while the cited study focused on the creation, implementation, and dissemination of social practices in a particular sector, namely the construction sector. Together, these findings demonstrated that successful implementation of social procurement requires strengthening the legislative framework,

developing incentive mechanisms, and ensuring strategic coordination between all actors involved in the process.

Strategic public procurement is a powerful tool for addressing both societal and government challenges. L. Duong *et al.* (2024), in their study on the use of strategic public procurement in the social housing sector, examined the key challenges and the need to involve various stakeholders to achieve NetZero goals. Despite differences in the subject matter (social housing and energy versus tactical equipment), the conclusions of both studies have shared features. The present study also focused on the use of strategic procurement to integrate social and environmental standards, although the focus was on the production of tactical equipment. It was found that a crucial factor for the success of such procurement is the involvement of all stakeholders and the removal of barriers such as a weak legislative framework and a lack of adequate institutional support. Both studies emphasised the significance of aligning the interests of stakeholders to achieve sustainable development and effective strategic procurement. Thus, although the subject of the study differed, both studies demonstrated that strategic public procurement is a key tool for addressing systemic challenges through the development of a comprehensive approach to procurement process management.

Summarising the results of the discussion, a comparison with the studies of other researchers confirmed the relevance and significance of strategic public procurement as an effective tool for achieving social, environmental, and economic goals. Specifically, the studies emphasised the role of procurement in improving product quality, supporting responsible producers, reducing social inequality, and increasing community resilience. At the same time, key challenges were identified, including a lack of strategic maturity, the absence of effective legislative mechanisms, insufficient stakeholder involvement, and the existence of

organisational and administrative barriers. These aspects require further research and improvement to maximise the potential of public procurement in various areas.

Conclusions

The results of the study on the legislative regulation of tactical equipment procurement, particularly in the context of working conditions at relevant enterprises and ensuring the development of national production of personal protective equipment, found that socially responsible procurement is a key tool for addressing contemporary challenges. This relevance is driven by the need of the state and society to improve the efficiency of resource use, ensure high labour standards and create favourable conditions for the development of national producers. The study confirmed that the existing legislative framework in Ukraine does not yet meet the requirements for ensuring transparency, efficiency, and strategic maturity of socially responsible public procurement. Among the key problems identified in the study is that the current public procurement legislation does not make provision for social indicators as mandatory criteria for evaluating tender bids. This makes it impossible to systematically account for the impact of procurement on the social sphere, such as job creation, support for local businesses, or reduction of social inequality. Furthermore, the lack of clearly defined mechanisms for state support for national producers markedly reduces their competitiveness in both internal and external markets. This situation hinders the development of national production, particularly in the field of tactical equipment, where both social and economic aspects of sustainable development are essential.

Research into the practices of other countries, specifically the United States and Finland, revealed that socially responsible public procurement can be an effective tool for achieving social,

environmental, and economic goals. In Finland, great attention is also paid to the transparency of processes, which enables effective monitoring of the impact of procurement on society. An analysis of international practices, particularly in the United States, showed the value of supporting local suppliers through clearly defined programmes such as FAR, where Part 19 and Section 25 provide mechanisms to encourage the participation of small businesses and suppliers owned by veterans, women, and representatives of national minorities, which creates a competitive environment and gives preference to domestic products in federal procurement. International examples of socially responsible public procurement demonstrated the significance of a systematic approach to public procurement policy development that accounts for local characteristics but is oriented towards best international practices. The application of such approaches in Ukraine could contribute to solving existing problems, specifically the development of national production of tactical equipment and increasing its competitiveness, which is especially relevant in the context of military operations and socio-economic challenges.

To improve outcomes in the future, it is necessary to focus on developing and implementing an effective legislative framework that provides mechanisms to support national enterprises in the context of socially responsible public procurement. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the transparency and accessibility of procurement procedures, as well as creating conditions for the broad involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Furthermore, a prominent aspect is the introduction of the latest methods for assessing the impact of procurement on socio-economic processes, which will facilitate more informed decisions.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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Питання формування соціально відповідальних публічних закупівель тактичного спорядження

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Анотація

Метою роботи було дослідження особливостей правового регулювання соціально орієнтованих публічних закупівель із фокусом на тактичне спорядження. У ході роботи здійснено комплексний аналіз чинного законодавства, виявлено ключові недоліки, зокрема відсутність механізмів для впровадження соціально відповідальних критеріїв у процесі публічних закупівель. Встановлено, що орієнтація на найнижчу ціну у тендерах ускладнює забезпечення якості продукції та соціальних стандартів праці. Дослідження також охоплювало аналіз міжнародного досвіду, включаючи законодавство Європейського Союзу, зокрема Директиви 2014/24/ЄС про публічні закупівлі, яка може бути адаптована в Україні. Результати дослідження показали, що в Україні існує ряд проблем, пов'язаних з проведенням соціально відповідальних публічних закупівель, зокрема тактичного спорядження. Процедури закупівель, зокрема, бронжилетів, вимагають суттєвих змін для підвищення ефективності та зниження корупційних ризиків. Однією з основних проблем є тривалі строки процедур, що не відповідають потребам термінових поставок для військових. У результаті, замість використання державних закупівель, багато командирів підрозділів та волонтерів звертаються до благодійних організацій або приватних постачальників, що призводить до несанкціонованих поставок і шахрайства. У дослідженні також було проаналізовано досвід США та Фінляндії щодо соціально відповідальних закупівель тактичного спорядження. У Фінляндії в рамках держзакупівель передбачено використання екологічних та соціальних критеріїв для вибору постачальників, що дозволяє забезпечити високі стандарти якості та сприяє сталому розвитку місцевого виробництва. Аналіз досвіду США показує важливість підтримки місцевих постачальників через програми, як Federal Acquisition Regulation, що заохочують малий бізнес та постачальників, і надаючи перевагу національним товарам у федеральних закупівлях. Висновки з дослідження свідчать про необхідність спрощення процедур закупівель. Це дозволить значно підвищити ефективність використання державних ресурсів, знизити корупційні ризики та забезпечити якісні поставки тактичного спорядження для потреб Збройних Сил України.

Ключові слова: військові дії; засоби індивідуального захисту; бронжилет; тендерна документація; гідні умови праці