



# PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN **COLOMBIA**

## **A DYNAMIC BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT OPEN TO EUROPEAN SOLUTIONS TO BOOST PUBLIC SERVICES**

- It is arguably a regional power, being characterized as neither a developed economy nor an emerging one. That implies local competitors in many sectors, as well as opportunities for collaboration with European firms.
- It is as large as France, but with complex topography, with the Amazonas river basin and the mighty Andes covering half of the country. Also, to consider the high urbanization rate, at 75%, which includes vast slums in the largest cities.
- Its political system is relatively stable, far from the U-turns seen in neighbours Venezuela or Ecuador. It has a business-friendly atmosphere, and that includes a local base of qualified staff, from blue to white collars.
- The country has been working for more than 10 years with the OECD in order to modernize its public administration; also concerning public procurement's machinery, although there is room for improvement.

## **WHY TENDERING IN COLOMBIA?**

With its market of more than 50M inhabitants, a constant growth rate, and solid rule of law, Colombia has an interesting role to play with those firms interested in the whole LataAm region.

Although its institutions are not as robust as, say, Chile, it has made improvements to better them off, lately. In this sense, Colombia and Chile are the only members of the OECD from South America (Costa Rica being the last one). Accordingly, the country's public bodies are committed to the rule of law and to respect international treaties.

Its local supply of technology and goods/services of its many challenges is limited, opening the room of collaboration with European suppliers. Colombia's public institutions have huge tasks ahead, such as in the Energy transition, to offer better public services in its growing cities, as well as to upgrade its health system. Value-added and a differential factor is key; tenders with low degree of specialization and/or technology are (logically) mostly awarded to local firms.

As is the case in most countries after the Covid pandemic, the central government has set an ambitious plan to stimulate its economy, by investing in different sectors, such as ICT, energy, health, telecommunications, etc.

### **COLOMBIA AT A GLANCE:**

- **Surface of 1,143,000 km<sup>2</sup>**
- **Distance from Brussels 9,000 km.**
- **50,9 M inhabitants**
- 5,333 USD/capita
- Index of Economic Freedom 2021: 68.1/100, 49<sup>th</sup> in the world, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Latin America
- The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021: 77<sup>th</sup> of 157
- World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index 2019: 62.7/100, 57<sup>th</sup> of 141
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2020: 39/100, 92<sup>nd</sup> of 179

### **INFORMATION:**

Unified tender portal:  
[www.colombiacompra.gov.co](http://www.colombiacompra.gov.co)

**Contact GOOSE to explore and access these market's opportunities**

[info@projectgoose.eu](mailto:info@projectgoose.eu)  
<https://projectgoose.eu/>

*GOOSE's services help European SMEs bid successfully to public procurement opportunities outside the EU*

## TIPS TO ENGAGE IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN COLUMBIA

- 1. Make your moves to save on bureaucracy:** design your strategy to overcome it; it could also include bidding via third parties, as subcontractor then, for local firms are inherently familiarized with local processes.
- 2. Local partnering:** consider partnering with local firms, even those not yet tendering, to which build up solid consortia, or also with other European firms already established in the country.
- 3. Be aware of all available info:** you can benefit from Colombia's "[Sistema electrónico de Contratación Pública](#)" -[SECOP II](#) to create alerts on new tenders, as well as to do your business intelligence on potential partners, competitors, etc.

- 4. Adapt to the local culture:** while dealing with the public administration, dress code and speech must be formal (e.g "usted" preferred to the "tu"); be patient if government officials are not always punctual or may even cancel meetings on short notice; also, do not be too direct when addressing a local, and take your time for exchanging ideas.
- 5. There is life beyond Bogota:** albeit the capital concentrates a big portion of public investment, there are interesting projects beyond it, in other cities such as Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla o Bucaramanga.

## GET READY FOR SECTOR BASED OPPORTUNITIES

- Colombia shows some deficit in its health sector, especially in its hardware infrastructure; also, the country needs to import almost everything to make it work, from pharmaceuticals, to MedTech; albeit, its personnel is qualified. The Covid context offers **additional opportunities for European firms, particularly there where is required superior technology, be in information systems or Medtech.**
- It is still a laggard in the region in basic infrastructure, from communication related to urban one. In this sense, before the pandemic there were ambitious plans like the [Plan maestro de transporte intermodal](#). Although some investments have been reprioritized, **the Government's ambitious recovery plan it is in fact reinvigorating those prioritized.**
- For larger projects, there is increasing use of PPPs, by which government gets financing & knowledge with little or no extra costs.
- Most of the investments will necessarily need the contribution of foreign suppliers, especially European ingenuity and technology.**
- In Smart cities, Bogotá, Medellín and Bucaramanga, have a lead; special focus in public spaces, digitalization, connectivity, democratization in access to ICT and dissemination of telecommunications infrastructure.
- In the **Green economy, as well, there is a long way ahead**, from environmental services, waste disposal, decontamination, and waste treatment plants.
- The **country has unexploited potential in renewables, both PHV and wind.** The current energetic mix is far away from the 15% of renewables (targeted by the Government), with the largest share still provided by hydro and thermal. This is already part of the Government's strategy, and, again, **European firms/institutions have a role to play.**

## TARGET SECTORS

