

Best Practices observed in the Region of Oulu

Regional Context

The Oulu region, located in Northern Finland, with the regional biggest city of Oulu, is known for its strong emphasis on innovation and sustainable development. The region has been actively involved in various projects aimed at enhancing infrastructure, digital services, and community engagement.

Importance of identifying good practices

Identifying and sharing best practices is crucial for continuous improvement in the renewal of public services through innovations and innovative procurement methods. It helps in learning from successful initiatives, avoiding common pitfalls, and fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration.


The City of Oulu won the 3rd prize in the prestigious [European Capital of Innovation Awards \(iCapital\) 2024](#). This recognition highlights Oulu's commitment to leveraging external resources and promoting innovative solutions to urban challenges. *Oulu encourages the generation of new ideas and solutions, creating a collaborative environment that is future-ready. Through initiatives that embody the "Oulu way" of co-creation, the city unites citizens, businesses, and public organizations in a shared mission to address urban challenges and ensure a thriving community* (arguments from the jury of the Award).

The finalist position and the 3rd Prize will bring to the City of Oulu an invitation to the respected network of European Innovation Council Forum. The EIC Prizes Alumni network is one of the working groups of the European Innovation Council Forum. It is a dedicated space and network for the winners and finalists of the European Capital of Innovation Awards to interact, cooperate, exchange knowledge, and share policy insights to boost innovation across the European Union.

Best practices observed

- **Sanction – Bonus Instrument in Piece Work/Procurement:** This practice involves the maintenance of district bike roads in Oulu. Service providers earn yearly bonuses if they meet certain conditions, such as no sanctions and choosing criteria that add value to the work, like social employment and using low carbon vehicles. Change in mindset: transition from piece work to customer service.
- **OuluINFRA:** This initiative focuses on outsourcing infrastructure construction and maintenance to improve quality and cost-efficiency. Extra value is placed on the well-being-at-work and job-satisfaction issues. The procurement process included a negotiation procedure with criteria such as price, quality promises, and a takeover plan with well-being-at-work considerations. Procurement positively impacts new markets and service production. The City of Oulu is a good and helpful reference to the service production enterprise. The biggest outsourcing with the transfer of business project





(value ~117,5 mil€ and of its kind) by public procurement in Finland in recent years and will be a national example in related cases.

- **OuluBOT:** The development of a robot assistant to help access the citizens and tourists to the information and public services on the city's web pages. The project involved a competitive procedure with negotiation and co-creation in the demo phase, resulting in efficient development and implementation. Service is in function and enabled in POHDE Ostrobothnia Wellbeing Service County with the name of Digital Health Care Centre.

Closing Remarks

The Oulu region's commitment to innovation and sustainable development is evident through these best practices. The next step will be to clearly define the responsibility (ecological, economic, and social) viewpoints and innovation supportive processes in public procurements. By continuously identifying and implementing good practices, the region can maintain its position as a leader in innovation and community engagement.

