

Market Dialogue – GRIP

Conceptual preliminary considerations for a stakeholder event of the City of Aachen within the framework of the “Green Responsible Innovative Procurement” initiative

Framework conditions

Objective

The City of Aachen is pursuing, within the so-called GRIP project, an initiative to decarbonise its procurement processes. As part of this, a stakeholder event (“market dialogue”) is to be held. The aim of the event and of the upstream and downstream communication is to turn procurers, suppliers, service providers and interest groups into co-designers and to define the initiative’s success factors. Ultimately, the stakeholders are to be informed and able to act so that they can implement the initiative for the benefit of the City of Aachen, its inhabitants and the participating businesses.

A market dialogue supports the climate-friendly orientation of public procurement by enabling early exchange with potential suppliers. The city gains insight into sustainable solutions, technical feasibility and price structures. At the same time, requirements can be formulated in a way that is in line with the market and legally compliant, which improves the quality of the subsequent tendering process.

The dialogue promotes innovation and competition, opens up the market to new actors and signals ecological objectives. It creates transparency, strengthens strategic steering and enables the development of practice-oriented criteria, for example for CO₂ accounting or life-cycle assessment. In this way, the market dialogue becomes a key instrument for future-oriented, sustainable procurement practice.

The City of Oslo has actively used market dialogues as part of its climate strategy, for example in the development and procurement of low-emission vehicles and through international cooperation to disseminate climate-friendly solutions. Such dialogues have helped Oslo to test technical feasibility, involve innovative suppliers, sharpen evidentiary requirements and accelerate the market maturity of sustainable products.

Target groups

Possible target groups and stakeholders include:

- Political decision-makers (council party groups, committees, district councils)
- Business and suppliers (Aachen Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK), Aachen Chamber of Crafts (HWK), sector associations: Bauindustrie NRW, VDV – Association of German Transport Companies, IT association regio iT, local companies in construction, energy, transport, IT and services)

- Other public contracting authorities and neighbouring municipalities (Aachen Building Management, Aachen Municipal Services, ASEAG – local public transport operator, STAWAG – Aachen municipal utilities, RegioNetz, StädteRegion Aachen)
- Public institutions: RWTH Aachen University, Aachen University of Applied Sciences, University Hospital Aachen, schools and municipal childcare centres
- Internal administrative actors (FB 14, FB 60, FB 63, FB 68, FB 11, FB 15, FB 36, E 18, E 26)
- Regional and supra-regional networks (Städtetag NRW, energy agencies, NRW4Climate, competence centres, EU / federal funding bodies)
- Financing and funding institutions (NRW.Bank, KfW, project agencies, regional banks and savings banks)
- Science and research (RWTH, FH Aachen, Forschungszentrum Jülich, universities, research institutes, think tanks)
- Civil-society actors (citizens' initiatives, environmental and climate protection groups, trade unions, consumer protection organisations)
- Media and the public (Aachener Zeitung, local and regional press, trade media, digital platforms)

Pre-event dialogue process

The event will yield significantly more meaningful results if key issues have already been identified and structured in a preparatory dialogue process. The aim is to make critical or controversial topics visible at an early stage, clarify information needs and systematically incorporate the perspectives of the different stakeholder groups. A central focus is on how markets can develop acceptance of climate-friendly procurement and which transformation pathways are realistic in the individual sectors.

Possible formats include:

- Online surveys to broadly gather assessments and expectations
- Interviews with representatives of individual stakeholder groups in order to gain deeper insights into needs, barriers and innovation potential
- Online focus groups, differentiated by sector clusters, to discuss transformation pathways and acceptance issues
- Asynchronous discussion forums or chat channels that enable continuous exchange and the collection of practical examples
- Micro-surveys that specifically capture opinions on individual aspects (e.g. CO₂ accounting, life-cycle assessment, documentation requirements)

We use the generic masculine in this text and refrain from listing all gender identities individually in order to improve readability; it is explicitly intended to include everyone of any gender identity.

Stakeholder event

The stakeholder event will take place in the first quarter of 2026 (06.03.2026). It may be held exclusively in person or in a hybrid format. The event is intended not only to provide information but also to foster dialogue. The following format suggestions are based on an assumed number of 70–100 participants:

- Welcome and introduction by the city leadership
- Keynote on climate protection and procurement
- Impulse presentations on the legal framework and best practices
- Panel discussion with representatives from administration, business, academia and civil society
- Parallel round tables on critical success issues (clustered by sector / impact)
- Live surveys and digital voting to prioritise fields of action
- Expert questioning in the plenary with direct feedback
- Best-practice marketplace with stands from municipalities, companies and associations
- Networking breaks with themed conversation corners
- Closing session with a summary of the results and an outlook on next steps

Communication after the event

The upstream dialogue and the event itself should be used intensively for communication purposes. This may include event recordings, publication of the results and interviews with participants. The communication structures with stakeholders that are built up in the process can be maintained and the stakeholder dialogue continued in smaller formats throughout the entire initiative.

SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST

Project set-up and scheduling

Project start and milestone plan

- **Activity:** appoint project team, define responsibilities, define milestones
(pre-event dialogue, event, follow-up)
- **Timing:** 07.11.2025
- **Tools:** project plan (Gantt), calendar

Budget and procurement of internal / external services

- Activity: define cost framework (venue, technology, catering, facilitation, documentation); clarify need for external service providers
- Timing: by 21.11.2025 (CW 47): clarify cost framework

Target groups, content and pre-event dialogue

Stakeholder mapping and prioritisation

- Activity: finalise list of target groups, cluster by sectors and climate-protection impact (high / medium / low), contact-maintenance plan
- Timing: CW 47/48
- Tools: stakeholder register (Excel), impact matrix, contact-status tracker

Define guiding questions and levers

- Activity: develop key questions for each lever (transport – GHG emissions, construction – materials, zero-emission construction sites, circular economy, energy efficiency)
- Timing: CW 48/49
- Tools: guideline, one-pager for each lever

Set up pre-event formats

- Activity: online survey (broad), interviews (targeted), focus groups (by sector), micro-surveys (acceptance issues)
- Timing: 1st quarter 2026
- Tools: survey tool (e.g. Microsoft Forms), interview guide, focus-group agenda, consent forms (GDPR)

Evaluation and synthesis

- Activity: cluster results (by sector / impact), work out controversies and critical success factors, prepare short reports
- Timing: 1st quarter 2026
- Tools: evaluation template, visualisations

Event design and logistics

Format and run-of-show planning

- Activity: define dramaturgy – welcome, keynote, impulse talks, panel, round tables, live polling, best-practice marketplace, closing

- Timing: CW 48/49
- Tools: production schedule, running order, room plan (plenary / breakouts), moderation cards

Venue, technology and catering

- Activity: book rooms, check hybrid set-up, arrange sustainable catering
- Timing: CW 48/49
- Tools: technology checklist (microphones, cameras, streaming), checklists for set-up / dismantling, contracts

Moderation and panel line-up

- Activity: approach and brief moderator and panellists for each cluster (administration, business, academia, civil society)
- Timing: CW 3

Round tables: topics and materials

- Activity: define a clear task for each table (questions, target outputs), prepare worksheets, canvases (impact vs. feasibility), result posters
- Timing: CW 5
- Tools: facilitation kit, table cards, templates

Live interaction

- Activity: prepare questions (prioritisation of levers, implementation readiness, acceptance), test polls
- Timing: CW 6
- Tools: live polling (Microsoft Forms with QR code)

Best-practice marketplace

- Activity: identify exhibitors (municipalities, companies, associations), allocate stands
- Timing: CW 6

Communication and invitation

- Activity: save-the-date, invitation, agenda teaser; registration and participant management
- Timing:
 - Save-the-date: CW 48/2025 (end of November)
 - Invitation: CW 1/2026

– Agenda teaser: CW 4/2026

Law and data protection

- Activity: photo / video consents, terms of participation, accessibility check, procurement compliance

Day of the event

Registration and welcome

- Activity: check-in, name badges, programme overview, reference to polling / QR codes
- Timing: day of the event, 60 to +30 minutes
- Tools: registration desk, information boards

Plenary and interaction

- Activity: welcome, keynote, impulse talks; live polling on the initial situation; panel discussion
- Timing: Block 1 (90–120 minutes)
- Tools: production schedule, timer, stage and media technology

Round tables and results work

- Activity: moderated discussions (60–90 minutes), filling in result posters, short pitch rounds in the plenary
- Timing: Block 2 (120 minutes including changeover)
- Tools: posters, facilitation material, photo documentation

Marketplace and networking

- Activity: exhibitor pitches (3 minutes each), visiting stands, themed conversation corners
- Timing: Block 3 (60–90 minutes)
- Tools: stand plan, pitch timing, feedback cards

Closing and next steps

- Activity: summary, vote on top measures, announcement of follow-up formats and schedule
- Timing: Block 4 (30–45 minutes)
- Tools: result slides, voting, roadmap slide

Follow-up and institutionalisation

Documentation and results report

- Activity: consolidate minutes, photos, polling results and table outputs; prepare management summary and list of measures
- Timing: week +1 to +2 after the event

Communication after the event

- Activity: thank-you email, summary of results, download area; use press and internal channels
- Timing: week +1

Launch workstreams and pilot projects

- Activity: prioritise measures (impact / feasibility), appoint responsible persons, set up pilots for 2–3 levers
- Timing: week +2 to +5

Institutionalisation and governance

- Activity: establish a continuous market-dialogue channel (forum / quarterly round table), monitor progress on the levers
- Timing: from week +6 onwards, on an ongoing basis
- Tools: annual roadmap, dashboard (impact / KPIs), moderation and communication plan

Roles and responsibilities (short allocation)

- Overall coordination: GRIP team
- Content / pre-event phase: specialist departments + moderation team
- Stakeholder management: communications / public relations
- Logistics / technology: event management + IT
- Documentation / evaluation: specialist team + data analysis