



The role of Procurement in the development of “Sustainability”

Di-Mens

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Research

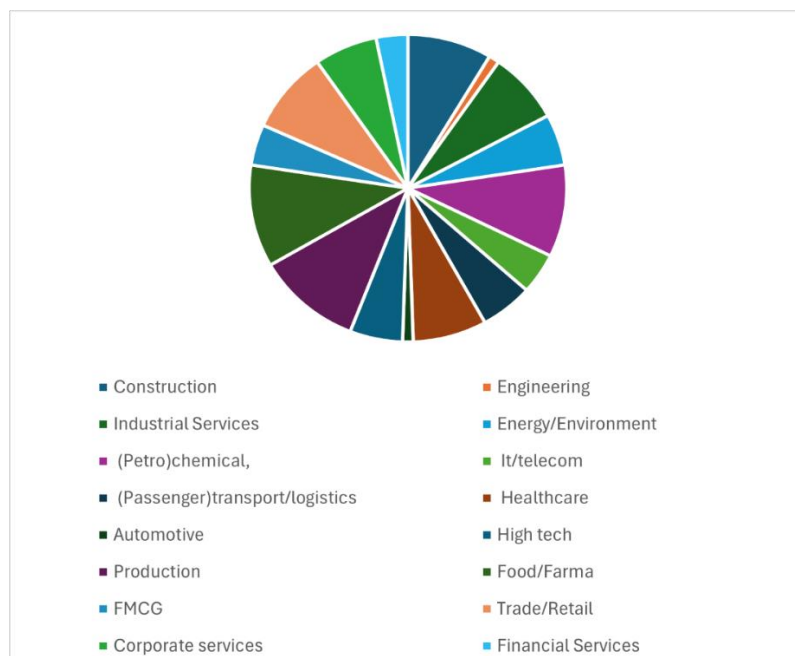
Sustainability is still described in 2025 as one of the important themes for business. What is the role of Procurement in this? In 2023, Di-Mens first posed this question to the procurement management of Dutch private organizations. The conclusion was not mild. In practice, Procurement generally proved to be hardly able to sink its teeth into “Sustainability.” Many prerequisites still needed to be realized before concrete results could be achieved. Given the significant impact of the supply chain on the sustainability of the realized customer value, the role of Procurement in the development of “Sustainability” could indeed be substantial. This survey aims to provide more clarity about the current state of affairs and developments over the last two years. Questions such as “How important is this theme for the organization and for Procurement?”, “What impact does 'Sustainability' have on Procurement?” and “How important is this theme for procurement professionals personally?” are considered. According to Directors/managers of Procurement, what are the drivers and bottlenecks to successfully engage with “Sustainability”?

Di-Mens sent this survey to over 1,000 English-speaking and Dutch-speaking Directors/managers of Procurement within the private sector in the Netherlands. In addition to qualification questions regarding industry and spend, 14 questions were posed.

Ultimately, we received 132 responses, which amounts to a response rate of 12.8%. Perhaps this benchmark will support the Director/manager of Procurement in determining the next steps for Procurement to make an optimal contribution to “Sustainability.”

Respondents

Q1 whatever sector you work in



This graph shows how the respondents are divided over the various sectors. Because not all sectors have generated enough results, we link the survey results to clustered sectors and mention differences in case of substantial deviations.

We've defined the following clusters of sectors:

Cluster 1 **Project-based Industrial**; Construction, Engineering, Industrial Services;

Cluster 2 **Capital intensive Services**; Energy/Environment, (Petro)chemical, It/telecom, (Passenger)transport/logistics, Healthcare;

Cluster 3 **Supply chain**; Automotive, High tech, Production, FMCG, Food/Farma

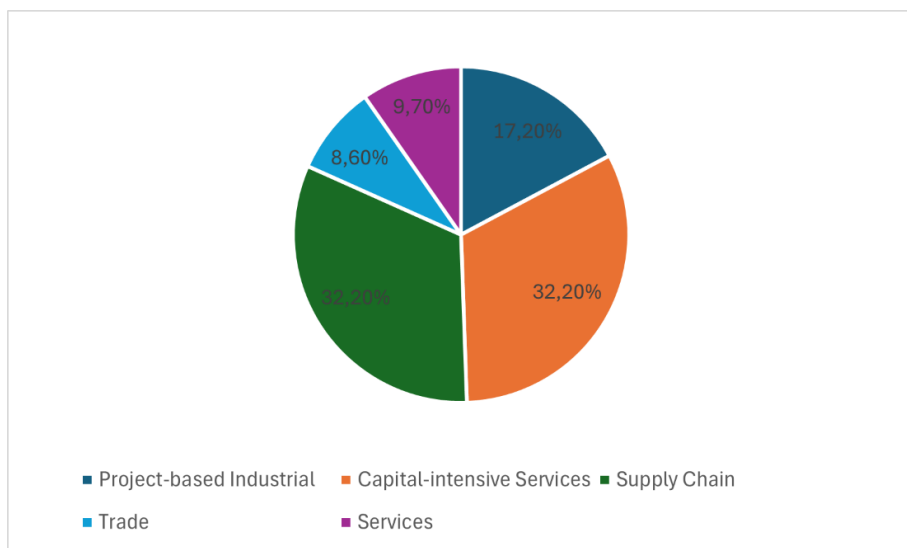
Cluster 4 **Trade**; Trade/Retail

Cluster 5 **Services** ; Corporate services, Financial services

The criterion, to what extent procurement affects the delivered goods and services of the organization, determines to what cluster a sector belongs. This has been distracted from the spend allocation divided over the various spend categories per sector. The more direct a spend category can be linked to the products and services delivered to the end user, the bigger the seeming impact on the results of the organization.

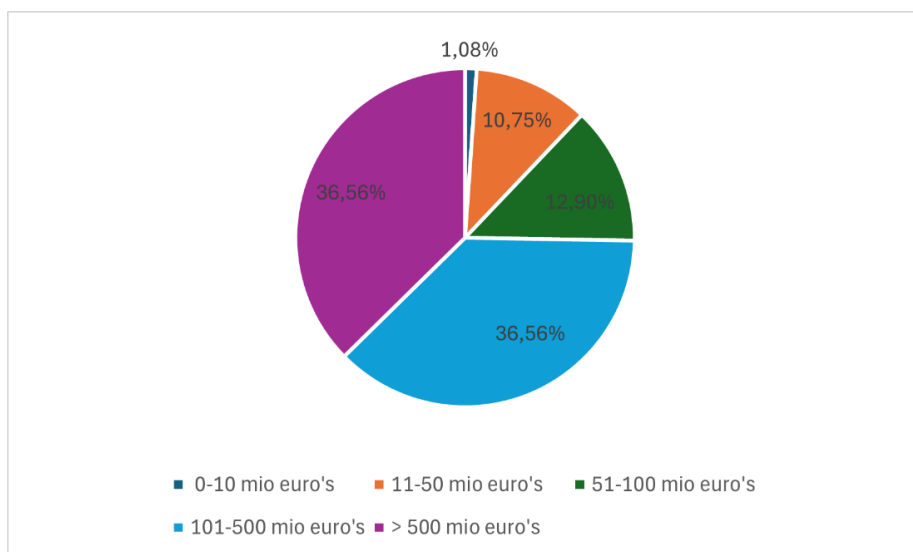
Clustering the sectors leads to the following allocation of respondents:

Q1 whatever sector you work in



Furthermore we distinguish in the level of spend of the organization of the respondents.

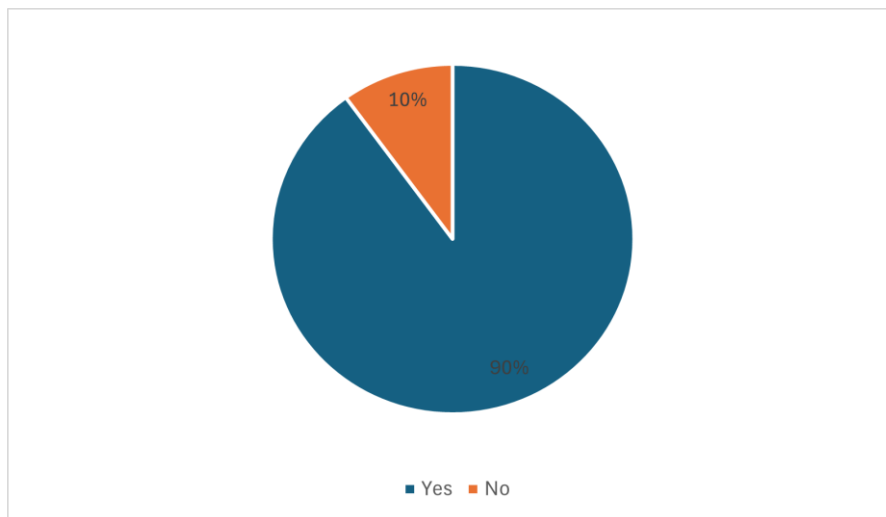
Q2 What's the spend of your organisation



Results

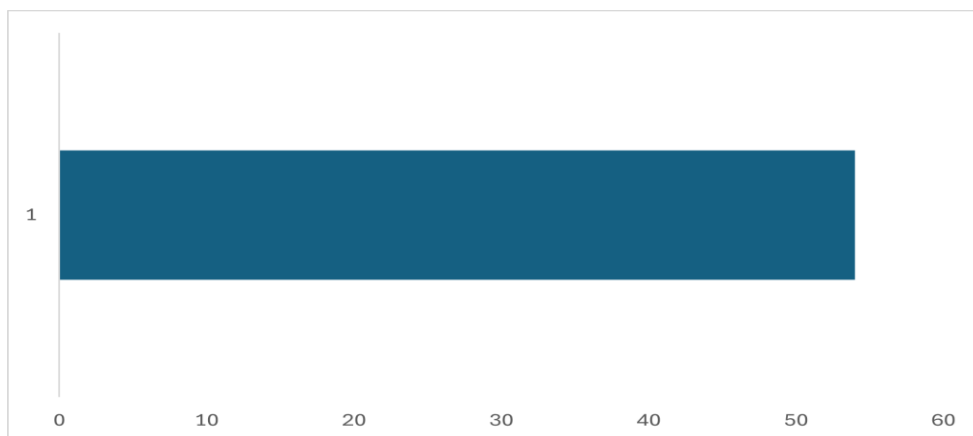
The results are the average scores from all respondents and should be interpreted as such.

Q4 Is sustainability part of the vision and mission of the organization



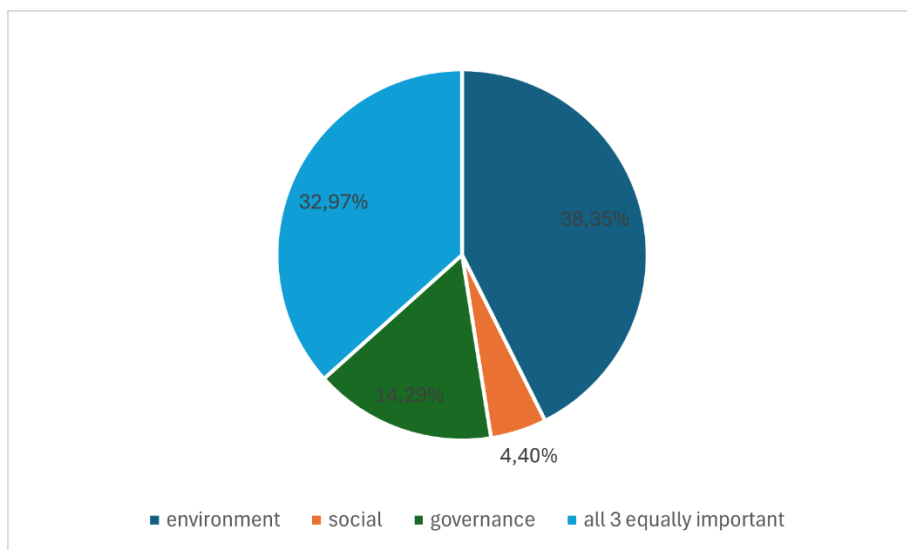
With a score of 90%, it is an overwhelming result. Research shows that currently about 70% of private organizations in the Netherlands mention "Sustainability" in their vision and mission. It seems that directors/managers of Procurement who responded positively to this question are overrepresented. This is important to keep in mind when analyzing the results of this research.

Q5 To what extend is the organization able to translate sustainability into customer value?



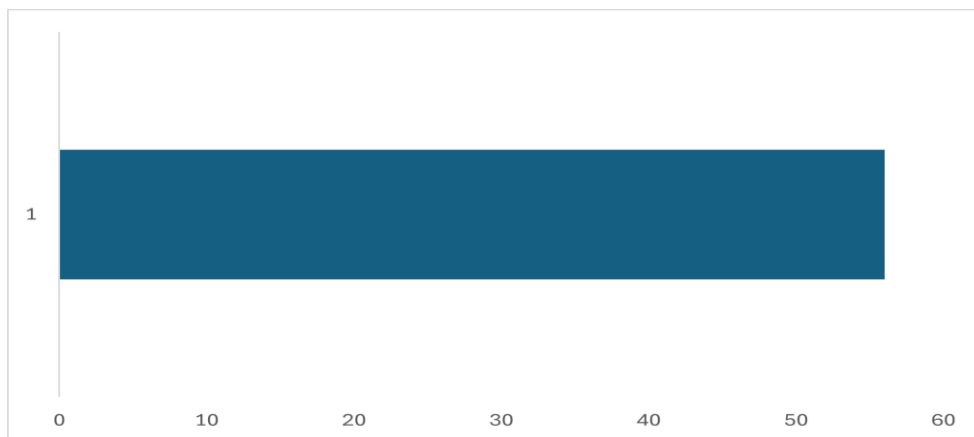
There is still work to be done when we consider that realizing customer value is the core activity of every organization. It would help in the development of "Sustainability" if the score were higher than the current 5.4, which is even slightly lower than the 5.5 score from two years ago. Organizations with a spend of over €500 million score sufficiently with a 6.2. The industry cluster "Trade/Retail" scores the lowest with a 4.1. For 35% of the respondents, the answer was heavily negative with a score of 4 or lower, and only 13% scored higher than 8.0.

Q6 Within sustainability what's the main topic for your organization?



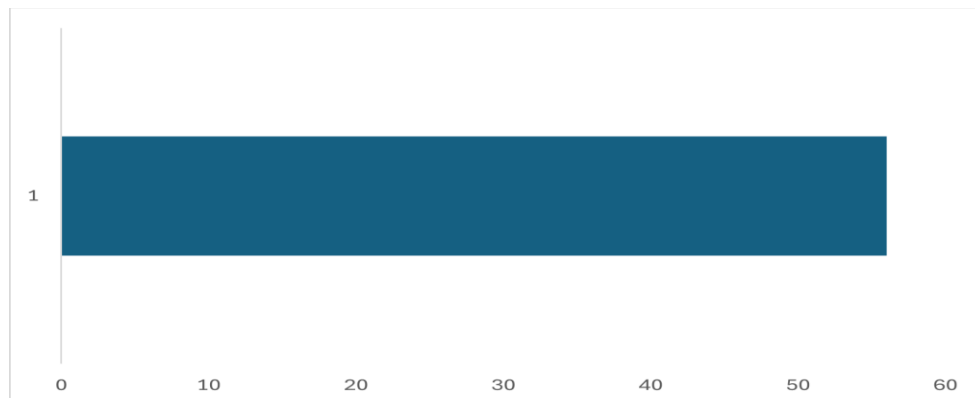
“Sustainability” mostly limits itself to one theme, with “Environment” receiving the most attention. Two years ago, a majority indicated that all three themes were equally important. The environment, in particular, appears to be gaining ground compared to the other themes.

Q7 To what extend is sustainability a mature topic within the Procurement strategy?



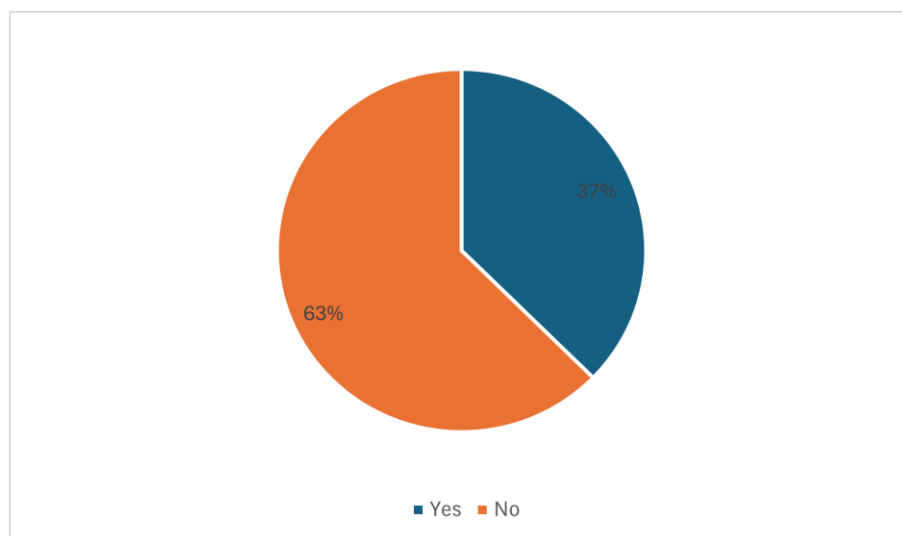
With a score of 5.6, it is just sufficient, the exact same score as two years ago. Organizations in the industry cluster “Capital Intensive Services” and those with a spend of over €500 million score well with respective scores of 6.5 and 6.6. On an individual basis, we see significant differences: 28% score an 8 or higher while 34% score a 4 or lower.

Q8 To what extent will Procurement be judged on sustainability results?



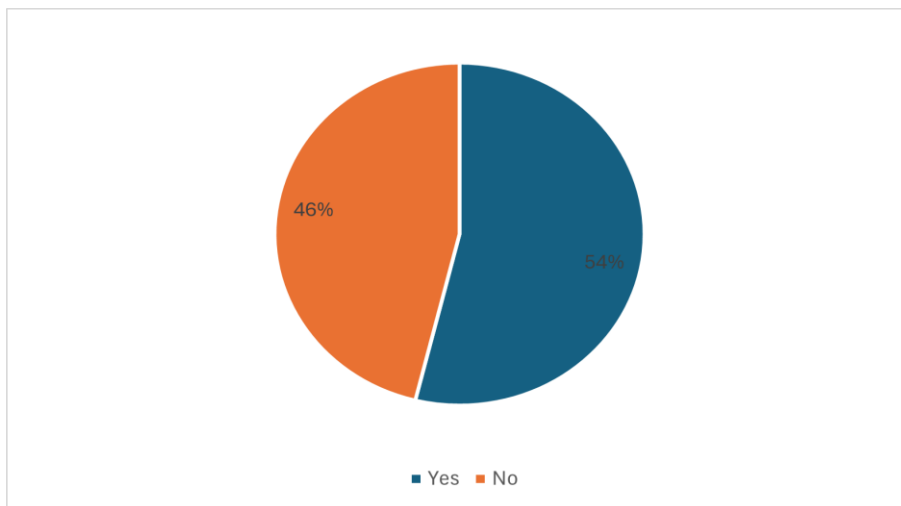
A score of 3.4 is even slightly lower than the 3.7 from two years ago. The “Services Sector” scores the lowest here with a score of 1.1. For 10% of the respondents, there is a score of 8 or higher, indicating that “Sustainability” plays a significant role in the evaluation of Procurement.

Q9 Do you experience a better position of Procurement in your organization since sustainability made its appearance?



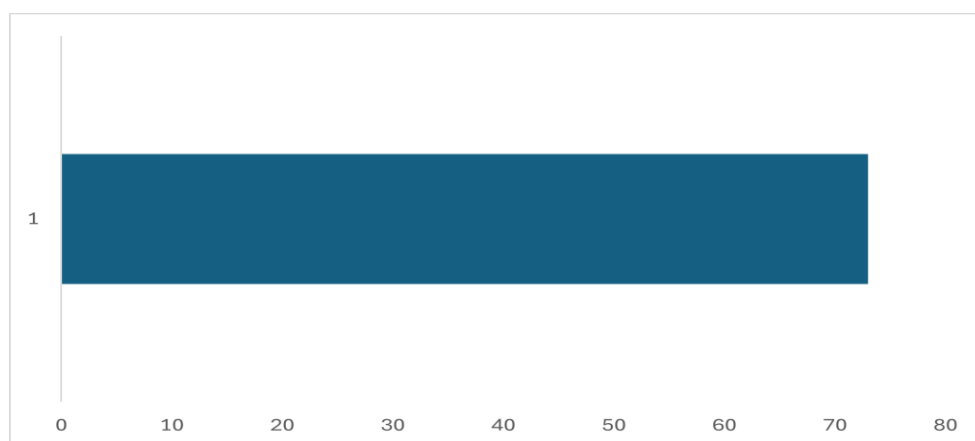
While the result two years ago was still 50/50, it has now dropped to just under 40% who experience an improvement in the position of Procurement. It remains positive, but the momentum seems to be waning. Particularly in organizations with a spend of less than €50 million, they notice little improvement in position with a score of 27%.

Q10 Has the cooperation with the supplier market been intensified since sustainability made its appearance?



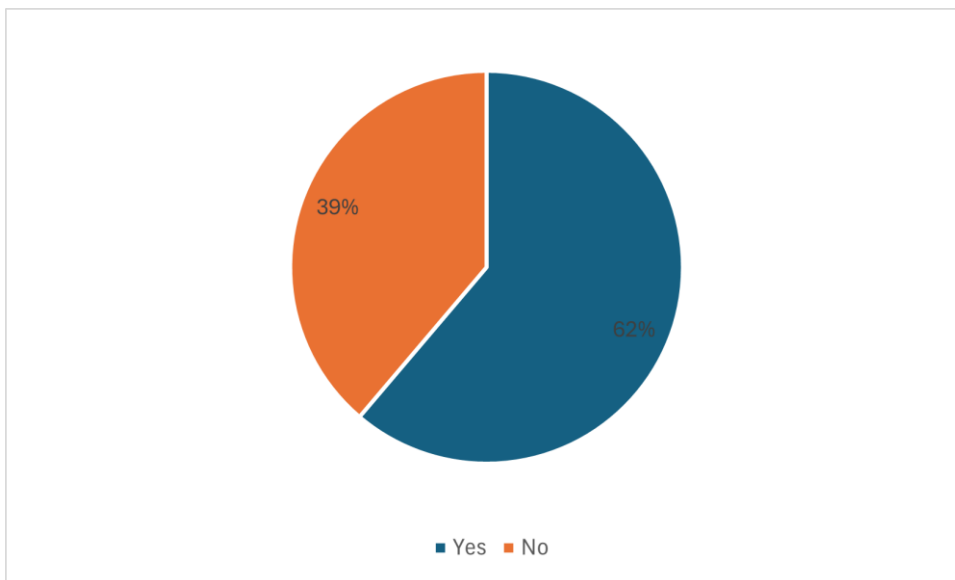
“Sustainability” seems to have a positive impact on collaboration with suppliers according to directors/managers of Procurement. However, we also see the momentum decrease here with a score of 55%, which was nearly 10% higher two years ago. The industry cluster “Capital Intensive Services” scores relatively high at 69%, while among “smaller” organizations with a spend of less than €50 million, only 18% experience more intensive collaboration with suppliers since “Sustainability” became a theme.

Q11 To what extend do you feel yourself intrinsic connected to sustainability?



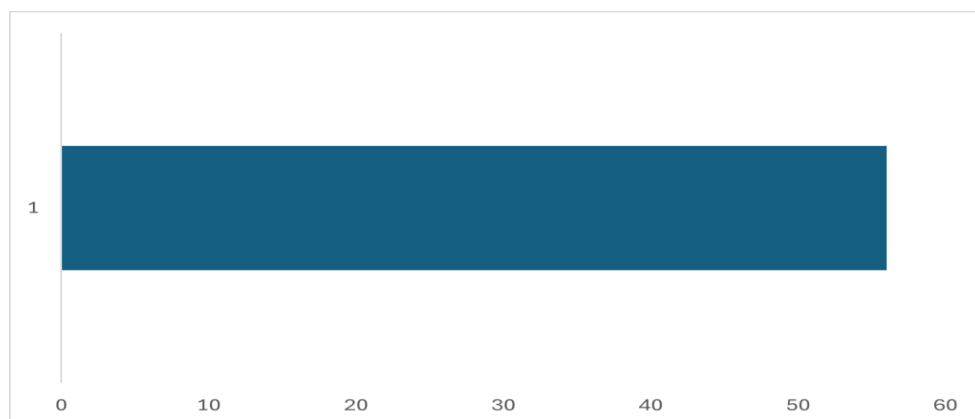
With a score of 7.3, it is more than sufficient and comparable to the score of 7.6 two years ago. Nearly 15% of the respondents are not enthusiastic about “Sustainability,” scoring a 4 or lower. For approximately half of the respondents, this is clearly different with a score of 8 or higher.

Q12 Has your job become more interesting since sustainability made its appearance?



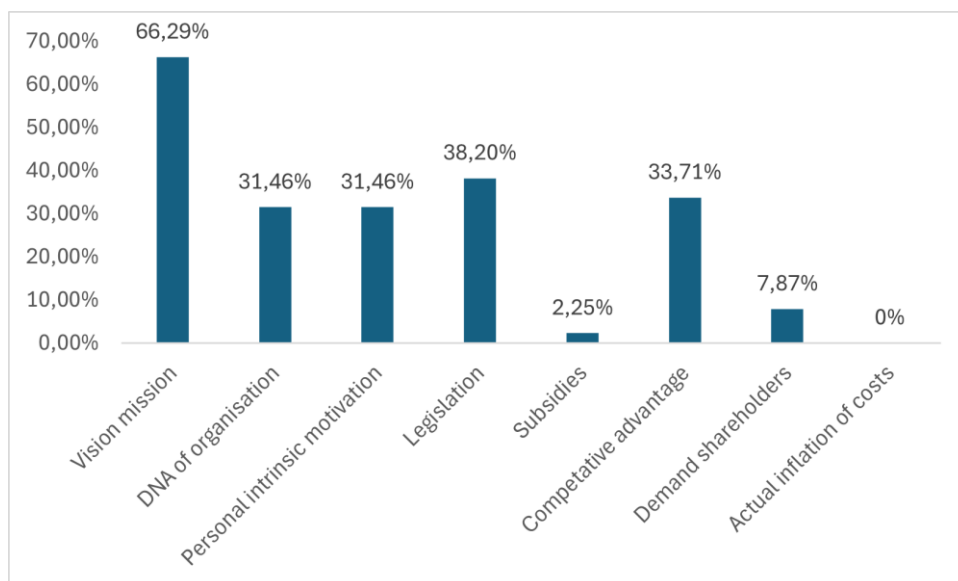
The theme of “Sustainability” has a positive influence on the intrinsic motivation of directors/managers of Procurement. However, with a score of 61%, it lags behind the 75% score from two years ago.

Q13 To what extend are you satisfied with the contribution of Procurement to the developments of sustainability?



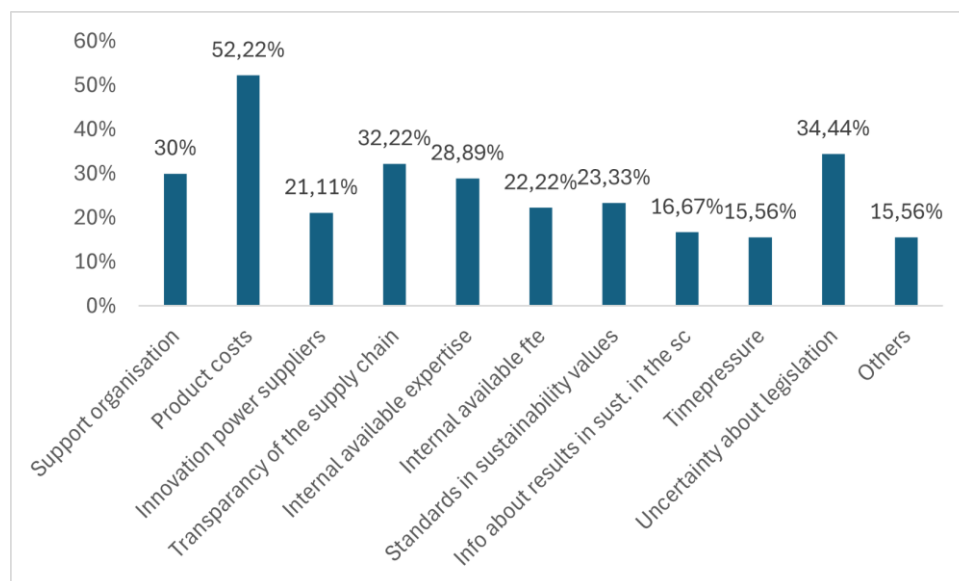
With a score of 5.6, there is a slight increase compared to the 5.2 score from two years ago. The industry clusters “Trade/Retail” and “Services” score substantially lower at 4.6 and 3.4, respectively, and organizations with a spend of less than €50 million also reflect this with a score of 4.7. On an individual basis, respondents score very negatively in 28% of cases with a score of 4.0 or lower, while in 21% of cases, it is very positive with a score of 8.0 or higher.

Q14 Which of the below mentioned parameters do you consider as the 2 most important drivers for sustainability in your organization?



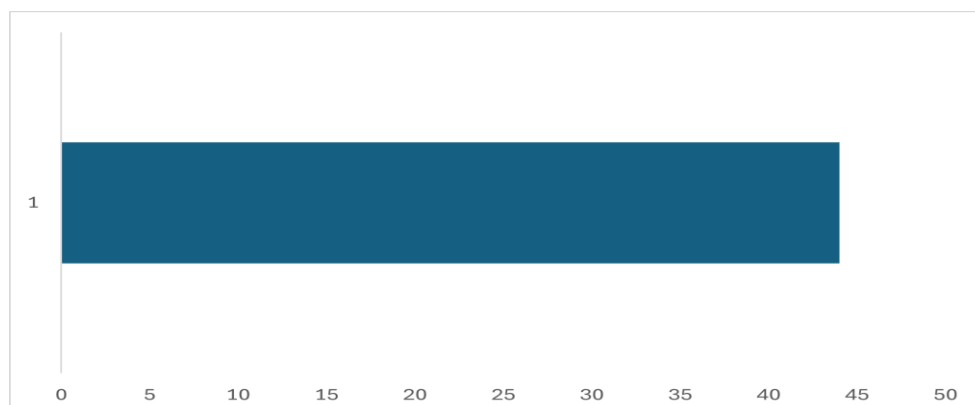
The proportions are almost the same as two years ago. “Vision & Mission” still stands out significantly. An external factor like “Legislation” is slightly increasing, but “Competitive Advantage” remains at the same level. “Customer Requirements” is frequently mentioned in addition as a motivation for “Sustainability.”

Q15 Which of the below mentioned parameters do you consider as the 3 most important bottlenecks for sustainability success in your organization?



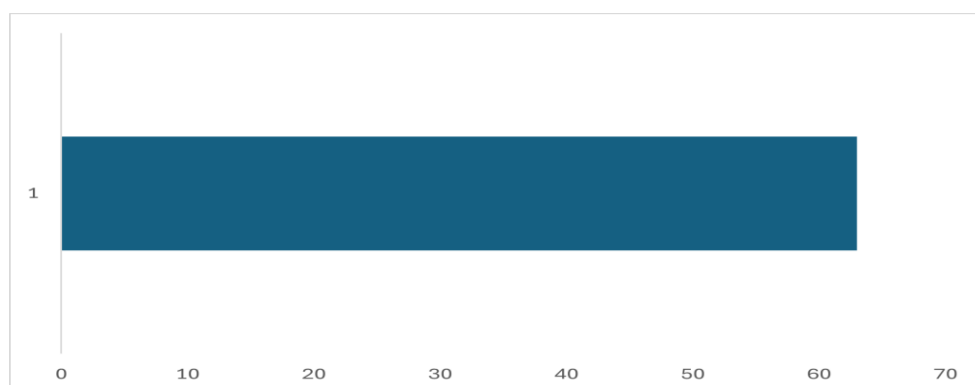
Again, we see that the proportions are nearly the same as two years ago. “Costs” is still by far the most frequently cited bottleneck for the development of “Sustainability.” We see “Uncertainty about Regulations” rising from 20% two years ago to 35% in this year’s research.

Q16 To what extent do you use external data to judge suppliers on sustainability?



A score of 4.4 indicates that organizations mainly rely on their own knowledge, experience, and assessments. Organizations with a spend of over €500 million are further along in utilizing external data, scoring 5.9.

Q17 To what extent does digitization plays a role in the judgement of supply chain?



A score of 6.3 shows a clear increase compared to the score of 5.1 from two years ago. The industry cluster “Supply Chain” scores notably low at 2.8, and the larger the spend of an organization, the more significant the role of digitization. This ranges from a score of 4.1 for spends less than €50 million to a score of 7.1 for spends over €500 million. On an individual basis, 30% score 8 or higher, while 23% score 4 or lower.

Conclusion

In general terms, we can conclude that "Sustainability" still plays a limited role for Procurement and that Procurement is only minimally involved when it comes to the development of "Sustainability." In organizations where "Sustainability" is mentioned in the organization's vision and mission, the organization is insufficiently able to translate the results in this area into customer value. Perhaps for this reason, the cost aspect still serves as the main bottleneck for the development of "Sustainability."

Procurement is not sufficiently engaged with the theme of "Sustainability." It is not adequately addressed in the Procurement strategy, and Procurement is hardly held accountable for results in this area. There has been some movement in the position of Procurement within the organization since "Sustainability" was introduced, but the momentum seems to be decreasing. Collaboration with suppliers has become sufficiently more intense due to the theme of "Sustainability," but here, too, the momentum is diminishing. Ultimately, directors/managers of Procurement are dissatisfied with the contribution of Procurement to the development of "Sustainability."

Procurement professionals find their work has become more interesting and feel connected to the theme of "Sustainability," although this connection also appears to be waning. The primary driver is the internal motivation and ambition from the organization. External factors such as legislation and competitive advantage are still of secondary importance, although the role of legislation seems to be strengthening. In addition to higher production costs, market opacity and the lack of clear frameworks are significant bottlenecks for the development of "Sustainability." The uncertainty regarding regulations has only increased over the past two years.

The tools available to Procurement seem insufficient to assess the supply chain in terms of "Sustainability," although digitalization is indeed developing in this area.

In summary, in practice, Procurement is generally still hardly able to sink its teeth into "Sustainability," despite a thin group of frontrunners that experiences it differently. When Procurement cannot make substantial progress in this area, one wonders what advancements organizations are making concerning "Sustainability." If the path to suppliers has not yet been found, it remains like mopping with the tap running. Many prerequisites will still need to be realized before concrete results can be achieved. Does Procurement have the leadership to pull this cart, especially when the momentum seems to be under pressure? It is, in any case, a wonderful yet tough challenge.