

Questions & Answers (Q&A)

Shield PCP Open Market Consultation Activities

Q1. Does participating in the Open Market Consultation prevent a company from later submitting a proposal to the tender?

A: No. Participation in the Open Market Consultation does not prevent companies from later participating in the tender. Companies are encouraged to participate, as the consultation helps define requirements and the state of the art, but it has no impact on eligibility for the future procurement procedure.

Please note that participation in the Open Market Consultation does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to any supplier or group of suppliers.

Q2. Are there eligibility requirements to participate in the tender (e.g. minimum turnover, certifications, administrative or technical requirements)?

A: Yes. The eligibility and selection requirements will be explicitly defined in the Call for Tender documentation.

In line with standard Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP) practice, the approach is generally to avoid imposing high financial thresholds (e.g. turnover requirements) and instead focus on the quality and technical merit of the proposal under the award criteria.

Certain evidence may be requested where relevant (for example, references from previous projects or certifications related to specific aspects of the solution). The intention is to keep barriers to participation proportionate and supportive of SMEs, while ensuring capacity to perform the contract. Final requirements will be detailed in the tender documents.

Q3. Must proposals be submitted as a consortium, and how are consortia evaluated within the PCP procedure?

A: Under PCP rules, both single entities and consortia are generally eligible to apply, unless otherwise explicitly stated in the Call for Tender.

A bidder may submit individually if it is capable of meeting all requirements alone. However, given the broad and multidisciplinary scope of the challenge, it is expected that many proposals will involve consortia bringing together complementary expertise.

In this regard, to address the full set of technical requirements, suppliers are encouraged to form consortia to increase their capacity to deliver a comprehensive solution. The matchmaking tool available on the project's website, as well as dedicated events, are designed to facilitate partner search and consortium building. In this context, a matchmaking session will be held during the OMC event in Paris on 25 February 2026.

In a PCP procedure, bidders submit their proposed technical approach in response to the defined challenge, and proposals are evaluated as submitted. The contracting authorities do not pre-select individual components and assemble teams themselves. External entities do not formally select or label consortia within the PCP procedure. The evaluation and selection process is conducted exclusively in accordance with the procurement rules defined in the Call for Tender.

The final eligibility and participation conditions will be specified in the Call for Tender.

Q4. Can a company participate in more than one consortium or submit multiple bids?

A: Participation rules concerning multiple bids or involvement in more than one consortium will be defined in the Call for Tender.

Typically, PCP procedures include safeguards to ensure fair competition, avoid conflicts of interest, and preserve equal treatment. The exact conditions — including whether participation in multiple consortia is permitted — will be specified in the tender documents.

Q5. Is there an obligation to include companies from several EU Member States in a consortium?

A: There is generally no automatic obligation to include companies from multiple Member States unless explicitly required in the Call for Tender.

However, eligibility conditions regarding the place of establishment will apply (e.g. companies established in EU Member States or associated countries), in line with PCP and Horizon Europe rules. Detailed requirements will be clarified in the tender documents.

Q6. How can smaller companies collaborate or form consortia?

A: Collaboration is strongly encouraged, particularly for companies that cannot cover all requirements individually.

The project provides a matchmaking tool on the website (https://shieldpcp.eu/tender/#matchmaking_form), and companies completing the matchmaking form will receive a consolidated catalogue of other organisations that have also expressed interest.

In addition, dedicated matchmaking sessions are organised during the Paris event (25 February 2026) to facilitate networking, partner identification, and consortium building.

Q7. Are you looking for a complete end-to-end solution, or can partial solutions covering specific functionalities be acceptable?

A: The objective of the upcoming PCP is to procure R&D services leading to the development of a complete solution addressing the defined challenge.

However, during the Open Market Consultation phase, companies may present partial solutions, individual technologies, or specific technological contributions. These inputs are valuable and help shape the final requirements, which are still being refined.

Innovation procurement does not require starting from scratch. Existing technologies — even if developed independently — may be adapted, reused, integrated, or further developed into a final solution. The key consideration is whether the proposed approach can collectively address the identified needs.

Q8. Must a solution address all three pilots, or can it focus on only one?

A: The three pilots will be operationally tested during Phase 3, and each public buyer is associated with a specific pilot scenario.

Solutions are expected to be applicable across all pilots. However, suppliers are not expected to develop three entirely different solutions. The expectation is to propose a generic, modular and scalable solution capable of responding to common operational needs shared across the pilot scenarios.

Validation activities during Phase 3 are expected to take place across the different pilots rather than being limited to a single site.

Q9. Can new components be developed from scratch, and what Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is expected?

A: Yes. The PCP allows for both existing solutions and the development of new components.

The expected TRL evolves throughout the PCP phases:

- Phase 1 – Solution Design: approx. TRL 3–4
- Phase 2 – Prototype Development: approx. TRL 5–6
- Phase 3 – Operational Validation: approx. TRL 7–8

Prototypes developed in later phases will be tested in real operational environments. It is possible — and often expected — to combine market-ready components with newly developed elements, particularly where integration is a key innovation gap.

Q10. Some components may already have a high TRL or be partially deployed. Is this an issue in a PCP?

A: No. The PCP does not require that every component be at a low TRL.

Innovation may lie in integration, adaptation, scaling, or combining existing technologies in new ways. What matters is the ability to advance the overall solution, address the defined operational needs, and contribute to the targeted TRL progression.

Q11. Is facial recognition or the use of biometric data required?

A: No. Facial recognition is not imposed as a requirement and is not mandatory. Providers are free to propose their own approaches.

Any use of biometric data must strictly comply with European and national legal frameworks, including GDPR. In several contexts, such use is highly restricted or prohibited, particularly for certain operators.

Legal and ethical analyses will be conducted for each pilot and country. If the processing of biometric data is not permitted in a given jurisdiction (for example, in France), such functionality will not be tested in that pilot site.

Q12. How will broader privacy constraints and differing national interpretations be addressed?

A: Solutions are expected to comply with GDPR and all relevant legal frameworks.

Where possible, minimising the use of biometric or personal data is preferable. Bidders must demonstrate compliance and propose an approach that remains legally sound across different national contexts.

Real-life deployments typically require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). The legal framework, particularly regarding algorithmic video surveillance, is evolving at both national and European levels. This evolving regulatory context is one of the reasons why the PCP initiative is relevant.

Q13. Who will operate drone neutralisation tools?

A: Drone neutralisation is currently foreseen only within the Spanish pilot scenario.

Such tools would be operated exclusively by authorised national authorities involved in that pilot. Not all actors are legally permitted to operate such equipment.

Responsibilities and operational arrangements will be clarified with the competent authorities.

Q14. How many providers will be selected in each PCP phase?

A: The PCP follows a competitive funnel approach:

- Phase 1: approximately 4–5 providers
- Phase 2: approximately 3 providers
- Phase 3: at least 2 providers

The exact number depends on the number and quality of proposals received and the evaluation results. Contractors are invited to submit a proposal for the next phase only if their performance in the previous phase is successfully evaluated.

Evaluation criteria and procedures will be detailed in the tender documents.

Q15. Is the PCP competitive or collaborative?

A: The PCP is competitive in nature. Suppliers or consortia develop their solutions in parallel, and the best-performing ones are invited to submit a proposal for the next phase.

There may be structured interaction with end-users, including periodic meetings or feedback moments, but progression between phases is based on competitive evaluation results.

Q16. How will evaluation be handled if different solutions cover different parts of the requirements?

A: At the time of the webinars, the evaluation criteria and weighting were not yet fully finalised.

The complete evaluation framework — including award criteria and weighting — will be defined and published in the Call for Tender documentation. Once launched, all applicants will have access to the evaluation methodology.

Q17. What is the final objective of the PCP?

A: The PCP is designed to support TRL progression and the development of mature, validated solutions suitable for future large-scale procurement.

It is not intended for immediate large-scale deployment. Instead, it supports development, integration, and validation in operational environments.

The PCP should also be viewed within the broader EU innovation framework, potentially paving the way for a future Public Procurement of Innovative solutions (PPI) involving multiple public buyers across Europe and supporting the creation of a European market for security solutions.

Q18. What is the total budget and the distribution per phase?

A: The total project budget is EUR 3,600,000.

The indicative distribution between phases is:

- Phase 1 – Solution Design: €450,000
- Phase 2 – Prototype Development: €2,250,000
- Phase 3 – Operational Validation: €900,000

The budget of each phase is divided among the selected contractors based on their financial proposals.

For all phases, contracts will be financed until the remaining budget is insufficient to fund the next best tender. The exact number of contracts finally awarded will thus depend on the prices offered and the number of tenders passing the evaluation.

Q19. Is research and experimentation funded?

A: Yes. Research and experimentation are funded within the PCP:

- Phase 1 focuses on solution design
- Phase 2 on prototype development
- Phase 3 on operational experimentation and testing in real environments

All phases are covered by PCP funding, subject to contractual conditions.

Q20. How will intellectual property rights be handled?

A: At this stage, the IP conditions are not yet fully defined. Based on standard PCP practice, intellectual property typically remains with the suppliers developing that generate it, not with the consortium.

In return, public buyers may receive usage rights or licences for the final solution, depending on the final IPR distribution model. The exact arrangements will be specified in the Call for Tender.

Q21. Is there any preference for patented solutions? Is patenting required?

A: There is no requirement or preference that bidders must already have patents. Patents were used in the project's analysis mainly to understand the state- of- the- art and overall innovation landscape.

Q22. Can the questionnaire be submitted multiple times?

A: The organisations should submit one answer. If an organisation has multiple solutions, these can be described within a single submission using the open text fields.

Q23. How is confidentiality ensured for questionnaire responses?

A: All responses provided by market parties will be anonymised and treated as confidential.

The SHIELD PCP consortium will not disclose specific answers from individual operators. Only general findings and a summary of responses will be published in an anonymous report on the project website.

Q24. What is the objective of the hybrid event (25 February)?

A: The hybrid OMC event aims to present the SHIELD PCP project and facilitate structured dialogue between public buyers and potential suppliers ahead of the forthcoming Call for Tender.

The event relevant to suppliers takes place on 25 February (the 26 February session is reserved for consortium members).

The agenda includes:

- Welcome and project introduction (rationale, use cases, PCP process)
- Presentation of the state-of-the-art analysis
- Overview of the Open Market Consultation (OMC) objectives and activities
- Interactive session with participants
- Presentation of next steps

- A dedicated matchmaking session (aiming at creating dynamics among participants to facilitate consortium building), including supplier presentations and bilateral exchanges

The objective is to clarify the challenge, gather market feedback, and support networking and potential partnerships among interested stakeholders.

Q25. Will the participant list be published?

A: The participant list will not be publicly published.

Registered participants may access information about other participants for matchmaking purposes, subject to consent.

Q26. What happens after completing the matchmaking form?

A: Companies that complete the matchmaking form will receive a consolidated catalogue of other organisations that have also filled it in.

Dedicated matchmaking sessions during the Paris event further support consortium building.