



Article

Improving the Efficiency of Budgetary Fund Utilization Through the Digitalization of Public Procurement

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Abstract: This article examines, from theoretical and practical perspectives, the impact of public procurement digitalization on the efficient use of budgetary funds. It analyzes recent institutional and regulatory reforms undertaken in Uzbekistan to digitally transform public procurement, including the improvement of the special information portal, integration of government information systems, electronic monitoring, determination of average market prices using artificial intelligence, automated risk analysis, and digital control over contract performance. Based on the KONEPS system of the Republic of Korea, the European Union's digital procurement infrastructure, and OECD recommendations, the priority areas for the end-to-end digitalization of public procurement are substantiated. The author develops scientific and practical proposals for integrating digital planning, automated reference pricing, risk profiling, contract performance monitoring, and procurement efficiency assessment within a unified digital framework.

Keywords: Public procurement, digitalization, budgetary funds, efficiency, electronic procurement, competition, savings, artificial intelligence, risk analysis, reference price, contract monitoring, e-procurement.

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1. Introduction

Public procurement is a key component of the public financial management system that transforms budgetary resources into specific goods, works, and services. Therefore, ensuring efficiency in public procurement is not limited to reducing procurement prices. It also encompasses accurate needs planning, objective assessment of market prices, expansion of the competitive environment, reduction of procurement lead times, monitoring of contract performance, and timely identification of risks related to corruption and conflicts of interest.

Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-684 "On Public Procurement" defines monitoring in the field of public procurement as a system of continuous observation through the collection, generalization, systematization, and evaluation of procurement information. The current Law establishes electronic systems, the special information portal, the register of contracts, and control mechanisms as institutional foundations of public procurement [1].

In recent years, this approach has been shifting from the stage of merely "moving procurement into electronic form" toward the digital management of the entire public procurement life cycle. The Strategy for Improving and Developing the Public Procurement System for 2025–2027, approved by Resolution No. 865 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 December 2024, identifies the expanded

use of digital technologies in public procurement, digital monitoring of contractual obligations, risk management, and the detection of affiliation and conflicts of interest as priority tasks [2].

This demonstrates that the ultimate objective of public procurement digitalization is not merely to establish electronic document flow, but to increase the effectiveness of every unit of budgetary and corporate funds spent.

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of public procurement digitalization on the efficiency of budgetary fund utilization using the procurement activities of Uzbekistan Airports JSC as an example, and to develop scientific and practical proposals for advancing digital public procurement on the basis of recent institutional reforms in Uzbekistan and leading international practices.

The digitalization of public procurement, the efficiency of e-procurement systems, and their impact on the rational use of public financial resources constitute a widely studied area in the economic literature. A synthesis of existing scholarly approaches makes it possible to classify research in this field into three main areas:

- the impact of e-procurement on economic efficiency and competition;
- the role of digitalization in enhancing transparency and reducing corruption risks;
- the management of the full public procurement life cycle based on data and digital technologies.

National literature pays particular attention to the organizational, economic, and institutional foundations of public procurement. In particular, U.Yu. O'roqov's textbook "Procurement of Budgetary and Corporate Customers" addresses the organization of procurement by budgetary and corporate customers and constitutes an integral component of the national scientific and methodological foundation for public procurement management [3].

In the international academic literature, empirical assessment of the impact of electronic public procurement on budgetary savings began considerably earlier. M. Singer, G. Konstantinidis, E. Roubik, and E. Beffermann examined the impact of e-procurement on government expenditures using Chile's ChileCompra electronic procurement system. The authors demonstrated that an e-procurement system can broaden supplier participation and reduce bid prices through stronger competition. Their estimates placed price-related savings at approximately 2.65%, while savings in administrative costs were assessed at around 0.28–0.38% [4].

These findings indicate the need to distinguish between two types of savings when evaluating the efficiency of e-procurement. The first is direct financial savings associated with a reduction in the contract price resulting from competition; the second is transaction-cost savings associated with reduced expenditures on document circulation, information search, bid submission, and organization of procurement procedures. This approach shows that assessing the effect of public procurement digitalization solely through the difference between the initial price and the contract price is insufficient.

S. Lewis-Faupel and co-authors empirically analyzed the impact of e-procurement systems on public infrastructure procurement in India and Indonesia. A significant finding of their study is that the introduction of e-procurement did not lead to lower procurement prices in all cases; however, it improved qualitative indicators of public contract performance. Road construction quality improved in India, while delays in the execution of certain public works declined in Indonesia [5].

This conclusion provides a scientific basis for interpreting efficiency in public procurement more broadly than the traditional "lowest price" criterion. In other words, the outcome of digitalization should be assessed through the interrelationship of price + quality + time + competition + transaction costs. This approach also provides a theoretical basis for developing the Digital Procurement Efficiency Index proposed in this study.

A second major strand of research on electronic public procurement concerns its potential to reduce corruption and subjective decision-making. A. Neupane, J. Soar, K. Vaidya, and J. Yong analyzed the anti-corruption potential of e-procurement technologies and argued that digital technologies can reduce public officials' monopoly over information and decision-making in procurement, decrease information asymmetry, and limit opportunities for informal relationships with procurement participants [6].

World Bank studies likewise regard electronic public procurement as a tool for enhancing transparency, competition, and efficiency. The Bank's methodological materials on e-procurement emphasize that such systems expand access to information, reduce transaction costs for public procuring entities and suppliers, and contribute to the development of a competitive environment [7].

The approach embodied in the World Bank's ProACT analytical platform indicates that the next stage in the development of e-procurement is not merely the electronic conduct of procurement, but the use of accumulated large-scale data to assess efficiency and integrity. ProACT enables the analysis of competition, transparency, and integrity indicators at the levels of contracts, procuring entities, suppliers, and markets using e-procurement data from different countries. Thus, modern scholarly approaches demonstrate a transition from the concept of e-procurement to data-driven procurement, i.e., the management of public procurement based on data [8].

The OECD study "Digital Transformation of Public Procurement," published in 2025, further develops this perspective. The OECD identifies three major dimensions of digital public procurement transformation: end-to-end integration of procurement processes, from planning through contract performance; the application of artificial intelligence and other emerging digital technologies; and the use of procurement data in management decision-making [9].

OECD research on the integration of public procurement and public financial management systems also emphasizes that digital transformation can strengthen transparency and competition by ensuring seamless data exchange between procurement systems, budgeting, financial management, and other government information systems. This implies that procurement digitalization should be viewed not as a stand-alone electronic trading platform, but as an integrated digital component of public financial management [10].

Recent studies have also established the role of artificial intelligence in public procurement as a distinct research area. According to the OECD, effective use of artificial intelligence requires the standardization and interoperability of procurement data, a high-quality data governance framework, and appropriate digital infrastructure. Consequently, the economic effectiveness of applying AI technologies in public procurement depends not only on the algorithm itself, but also directly on the completeness, reliability, and interoperability of the data that feed it [11].

The Republic of Korea's KONEPS system is of particular importance as a practical embodiment of these theoretical approaches. According to the Public Procurement Service of Korea, KONEPS organizes the procurement process—including tender announcement, bid submission, contract conclusion, and payment—within a unified electronic environment. Official assessments emphasize that the system has contributed to improving the administrative efficiency and transparency of public procurement [12].

Recent empirical studies also confirm that the impact of digitalization extends beyond price indicators. For example, a 2026 study by S. Mocetti and co-authors found that the introduction of electronic public procurement increased the transparency of procurement information and reduced the duration of administrative procedures [13].

At the same time, the reviewed literature shows that individual outcomes of electronic public procurement—price savings, competition, transparency, corruption risk,

or administrative costs—have largely been examined as separate indicators. A more comprehensive analysis is still required to assess the entire digital procurement cycle, from planning through contract performance and payment, in conjunction with the efficiency of budgetary fund utilization.

This need is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where recent regulatory reforms are establishing mechanisms for AI-based market price determination, automated risk analysis, integration of information systems, and digital monitoring of contract performance. Their impact on the procurement efficiency of specific public and corporate procuring entities therefore requires empirical assessment.

The distinguishing feature of this study in relation to the existing literature is that it considers public procurement digitalization not merely as an electronic trading mechanism, but as a unified digital management chain comprising planning – determination of reference prices – competitive procurement – contracting – payment – monitoring – risk analysis. In addition, based on the practical procurement data of Uzbekistan Airports JSC for 2021–2025, the study evaluates financial savings generated through competitive procurement and proposes the development of a “Digital Procurement Efficiency Index (RHSI)” that supplements such savings with indicators of contract performance, competition, procurement time, and digital integration.

From this perspective, the study links the conceptual progression of e-procurement → digital procurement → data-driven procurement found in the international literature with public procurement practice in Uzbekistan and interprets digitalization more broadly than merely as a means of saving budgetary resources—as a comprehensive institutional mechanism for improving the effectiveness of public financial resource utilization.

2. Research Methodology

The study employs methods of systems analysis, comparative analysis, dynamic analysis, grouping, economic and statistical analysis, and scientific abstraction.

The empirical database comprises information provided by Uzbekistan Airports JSC on the number of auctions, e-shop purchases, tenders and competitive selections conducted in 2022–2025 [14], the initial values of procurement lots, and the values of concluded contracts.

Direct financial savings achieved as a result of procurement were calculated using the following formula:

$$S = IV - CV,$$

where:

S — amount saved;

IV — initial value of the procurement item;

CV — value of the concluded contract.

The relative savings indicator was determined using the following formula:

$$SR = ((IV - CV) / IV) \times 100.$$

In the primary data provided, the initial and transaction values for e-shop purchases in 2022–2024 were reported as exactly identical to the corresponding auction values. Therefore, these indicators were not counted twice in calculating the overall financial effect. The number of e-shop transactions, however, was analyzed as an independent indicator.

The international comparative analysis draws on the OECD’s 2025 report “Digital Transformation of Public Procurement,” the European Union’s digital public procurement infrastructure, and the experience of the Republic of Korea’s KONEPS system [15]. The OECD identifies end-to-end integration of procurement processes, adoption of new

technologies, and data-driven decision-making as key directions for developing digital public procurement.

3. Results

A New Stage in the Digitalization of Public Procurement in Uzbekistan

An analysis of regulatory and legal documents adopted in Uzbekistan during 2024–2026 shows that the digitalization of public procurement is entering a qualitatively new stage.

The Public Procurement Development Strategy for 2025–2027 provides for mechanisms to sort, download, and analyze open data on the special information portal; exchange data between the portal and the information systems of ministries and agencies; automatically generate statistical and analytical information; and disclose the results of evaluations conducted by procurement commissions.

The Strategy also establishes tasks to compare initial prices entered by public procuring entities when publishing procurement notices with the results of previously completed procurements, automate data collection and analysis, introduce a contract performance module, and disclose procurement-related payments.

Resolution No. 476 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 30 July 2025, in addition to regulating the activities of electronic public procurement system operators, enables information on participants' tax reporting, employees, fixed assets, specialized equipment, licenses, and permits to be obtained through electronic integration with the information systems of government bodies [16]. This creates a legal basis for moving from the practice of repeatedly submitting the same information to the state toward a model of automated data verification.

In particular, Decree No. PF-259 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 26 December 2025 marked an important new stage in the digitalization of public procurement [17]. The Decree provides for the development, within the special information portal, of an electronic module that calculates the average market price of procurement items using artificial intelligence technologies; enables the automated determination of winners in certain procurements without intervention by the procurement commission; and supports ex ante risk analysis. It also mandates integration of the remote conflict-of-interest detection system on the "e-anticor.uz" platform with the public procurement portal [4].

The Decree also introduced, from 1 January 2026, a new competitive procurement procedure referred to as a "request for proposals." Under this procedure, the process—from placing the notice in the electronic system to automatically entering contract information into the Unified Register—is carried out digitally. In addition, the requirement under Decree No. PF-259 to develop a procedure for determining the average market price of procurement items expands the possibilities for establishing digital financial control across the "initial price – market price – contract price" chain.

Decree No. PF-17 dated 4 February 2026 established the Agency for Industrial Cooperation and Public Procurement and transferred to it the tasks, functions, and powers of the Ministry of Economy and Finance in the field of public procurement [18]. Resolution No. 393 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 20 July 2026 also designated the Agency for Industrial Cooperation and Public Procurement as the authorized body for public procurement in the relevant regulatory documents[19].

Thus, the emerging model of public procurement digitalization in Uzbekistan is forming the following chain: digital needs planning → automated market price analysis → electronic competition → automated evaluation → electronic contract → monitoring of contract performance and payments → risk analysis → control and audit.

Analysis of Procurement Dynamics at Uzbekistan Airports JSC

According to the data provided, a total of 1,018 auction, e-shop, tender, and competitive selection procurements were recorded for Uzbekistan Airports JSC during 2021–2025.

Table 1. Dynamics of Public Procurement at Uzbekistan Airports JSC by Procurement Method.

Year	Number of auctions	E-shop	Tenders and competitive selections	Total
2022	130	229	80	439
2023	2	160	66	228
2024	3	155	64	222
2025	0	79	49	128
Total	135	623	259	1 017

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Uzbekistan Airports JSC.

During the period under review, 61.3% of procurements were conducted through the e-shop, 25.4% through tenders and competitive selections, and 13.3% through auctions. The number of auctions amounted to 130 in 2022, declined to 2 in 2023 and 3 in 2024, while no auctions were recorded in the 2025 data. E-shop procurements also declined from 229 in 2022 to 79 in 2025.

However, a decline in the number of procurements does not imply a decrease in the volume of funds. On the contrary, a trend toward larger-value tenders and competitive selections is observed.

Table 2. Savings in Tender and Competitive Selection Procurements of Uzbekistan Airports JSC.

Year	Number of tenders	Initial value, UZS million	Contract value, UZS million	Savings, UZS million	Savings, %
2022	80	117 854.1	97 368.9	20 485.2	17.38
2023	66	181 584.2	150 545.6	31 038.6	17.09
2024	64	212 792.2	180 953.2	31 839.0	14.96
2025	49	253 907.1	203 484.9	50 422.1	19.86
Total	259	766 137.7	632 352.7	133 785.0	17.46

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Uzbekistan Airports JSC.

According to the table, during 2022–2025 the total initial value of tenders and competitive selections amounted to UZS 766.1 billion, while the value of concluded contracts totaled UZS 632.4 billion. As a result, UZS 133.8 billion was saved, equivalent to an average of 17.46% of the initial value.

At the same time, although the number of tenders and competitive selections decreased from 80 in 2022 to 49 in 2025, or by 38.8%, the total value of contracts increased from UZS 97.4 billion to UZS 203.5 billion, or by nearly 2.1 times.

The average contract value per tender or competitive selection was:

- in 2022 — UZS 1.22 billion;
- in 2023 — UZS 2.28 billion;
- in 2024 — UZS 2.83 billion;
- in 2025 — UZS 4.15 billion.

Thus, during 2022–2025, the amount of funds attributable to one tender increased by more than 3.4 times.

This trend indicates that, under conditions of procurement digitalization, control should be organized not only according to the number of procurements, but also according to their financial materiality and risk level. In particular, for high-value tenders, the

importance of automatically comparing the initial price with market prices and monitoring contract performance in real time is increasing.

Auction data also demonstrate a significant effect of competition-based price reductions. During 2022–2024, the total initial value of auctions amounted to UZS 95.3 billion, while transaction values totaled UZS 70.5 billion, generating savings of approximately UZS 24.8 billion, or 26%.

These figures indicate that electronic competition mechanisms have the potential to reduce procurement prices. However, the full economic effect of digitalization should not be limited solely to price reductions.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Digitalization and Budgetary Efficiency

The results of the analysis confirm that an electronic competitive environment contributes to the generation of price savings. However, in modern public procurement, the concepts of the **“lowest price”** and the **“most efficient procurement”** are not identical.

If a low-priced contract is subsequently not performed on time, if low-quality products are supplied, or if additional costs arise, the initially recorded savings may not translate into actual budgetary efficiency.

Therefore, a digital procurement system should simultaneously ensure the following three outcomes:

- first, an optimal procurement price;
- second, stronger competition and lower transaction costs;
- third, high-quality and timely contract performance.

The OECD’s 2025 study likewise considers digital transformation not as a stand-alone electronic trading tool, but as a system that integrates procurement processes **end-to-end**, introduces new technologies, and enables data-driven decision-making.

This approach is particularly relevant for corporate procuring entities such as Uzbekistan Airports JSC, which conduct large-volume procurements. In high-value contracts, even a 1–2% pricing error may result in additional expenditures amounting to billions of Uzbek soums.

International Experience

The Republic of Korea’s KONEPS—Korea ON-line E-Procurement System—is one of the most advanced models of digital public procurement. KONEPS covers the entire process from procurement request through tendering, contracting, acceptance, and payment within a unified electronic environment and is integrated with more than 200 external information systems. According to the Public Procurement Service of Korea, the reduction in transaction costs and broader opportunities for participation through e-procurement have resulted in a significant increase in the number of participants.

The most important aspect of the KONEPS experience for Uzbekistan is not merely the electronic conduct of bidding, but the principle of “enter data once – use it multiple times” and automated information exchange with government registries.

In the European Union, digital public procurement is likewise not limited to electronic tendering. The European Commission uses the Public Procurement Data Space, TED, eForms, eInvoicing, the European Single Procurement Document, and common procurement classifications as key elements of digital procurement. The European Commission emphasizes that digital transformation should also reorganize pre-tender and post-tender stages and integrate a data-driven approach across different phases of the procurement process.

World Bank analyses of Georgia's experience identify such outcomes of e-procurement as reduced paper documentation, remote participation by bidders, increased competition and transparency, and reduced risks of collusion. At the same time, the next stage of the electronic system highlighted the need to provide data in machine-readable formats and develop procurement analytics mechanisms.

From this perspective, the measures envisaged in Uzbekistan's 2025–2027 Strategy to generate data in machine-readable formats, automate analysis, and integrate with government information systems in real time are consistent with international trends.

Table 3. International Experience and Mechanisms Applicable to Uzbekistan.

International experience	Key mechanism	Proposal for Uzbekistan
Republic of Korea — KONEPS	Full digitalization of the procurement cycle and integration with 200+ systems	Establish a unified “planning–procurement–contract–payment–audit” framework
European Union	Standardized data, eForms, eInvoicing, and a common data space	Develop a unified national procurement classification and expand machine-readable data
OECD countries	Data-driven procurement, AI, and analytics	Introduce real-time risk analysis and procurement efficiency KPIs
Georgia	Open and machine-readable procurement data	Strengthen opportunities for public and independent analysis based on open data

Scientific Novelty And Practical Proposals

In our view, the following scientific and practical mechanisms should be introduced to further improve the efficiency of budgetary fund utilization through the digitalization of public procurement.

First proposal — introduction of a “digital procurement passport.” A unified electronic passport should be created for each procurement from the stage of need identification until full completion of the contract. The passport should integrate data on planned quantities, warehouse balances, previous procurement prices, average market prices, the number of participants, contract value, savings, payments, and contract performance.

This would eliminate the need to search for information on a single procurement across different information systems and would ensure continuity of financial control.

Second proposal — introduction of an AI-based dynamic reference price system. The module envisaged by Decree No. PF-259 for calculating the average market price using artificial intelligence should be designed more broadly than a simple “average price” indicator.

The system should calculate a dynamic reference price range on the basis of: previous procurement price + prices paid by other public procuring entities + prices on electronic trading platforms + inflation + regional logistics costs.

If the initial price entered by a public procuring entity exceeds the reference range, for example above a defined critical threshold, the system should automatically generate a risk signal.

Third proposal — introduction of a unified digital risk profile for public procurement.

The following situations may be assessed as automated risk indicators:

- setting the initial price above the market price;
- repeated contracts with a single participant;
- interrelated participants;
- repeated procurement of the same item within a short period;
- artificial splitting of procurement into smaller lots;
- repeated participation of the same bidders in tenders;
- subsequent increases in contract value;
- systematic breaches of delivery deadlines.

This would allow control authorities to automatically select high-risk procurements rather than examining all procurements indiscriminately.

Fourth proposal — transition from price savings to an indicator of “overall procurement efficiency.” In practice, procurement efficiency is often assessed as:

Initial price – contract price.

In our view, this approach should be expanded through the introduction of the following Digital Procurement Efficiency Index:

$$RHSI = f(T; R; M; S; I),$$

where:

T — price savings;

R — level of competition;

M — time spent on procurement; **S** — timely and high-quality performance of the contract;

I — completeness of data and degree of digital integration.

Accordingly, a contract that generates substantial savings but is performed late or with inadequate quality would not be classified as highly efficient procurement.

Fifth proposal — integration of the procurement planning module with accounting, warehouse, and budget systems. Decree No. PF-259 provides for the development of a module for forming electronic procurement plans that take inventories into account. Direct integration of this mechanism with ERP and warehouse systems of corporate procuring entities would limit excessive stock accumulation and repeated procurement of identical goods.

This mechanism is particularly important in the case of Uzbekistan Airports JSC. While the number of tenders is declining, the average financial value of a single procurement is increasing sharply. Consequently, the financial importance of pre-procurement digital analysis is also increasing.

Sixth proposal — transformation of contract performance into an object of “online financial control.” Electronic control should not end when the contract is concluded. Data on electronic invoices, treasury or bank payments, goods acceptance documents, penalties, and fines should be linked within a unified system.

As a result, every stage of the contract → delivery → acceptance → invoice → payment chain would be monitored automatically.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that public procurement digitalization is an important institutional factor in improving the efficiency of budgetary and corporate fund utilization.

In the case of Uzbekistan Airports JSC, the initial value of tender and competitive selection procurements in 2022–2025 amounted to UZS 766.1 billion; as a result of competition, contracts were concluded for UZS 632.4 billion, generating total savings of UZS 133.8 billion, or 17.46%. In addition, the average price reduction in auctions was approximately 26%.

However, the analysis demonstrates that the efficiency of fund utilization in public procurement cannot be adequately assessed solely by the reduction of the contract price relative to the initial price. As procurement becomes larger in value, the financial importance of substantiating needs, accurately determining initial prices, assessing the level of competition, and evaluating contract performance increases.

Recent legislative reforms are creating a legal basis for transitioning Uzbekistan's public procurement system from a conventional electronic bidding model to an integrated management model based on digital data. The 2025–2027 Strategy, Decree No. PF-259, new requirements for electronic system operators, and the establishment of the Agency for Industrial Cooperation and Public Procurement have formed the institutional foundation for this transformation.

In our view, the next stage of reform should focus on the transition from "electronic public procurement" to "intelligent public procurement." AI-based reference prices, automated risk profiles, a digital procurement passport, real-time monitoring of contract performance, and a comprehensive procurement efficiency index should be integrated within a unified information environment.

The introduction of these mechanisms would reduce subjectivity in procurement planning, prevent unjustifiably high initial prices, strengthen competition, direct control resources toward high-risk operations, and establish continuous monitoring of contract performance.

As a result, public procurement digitalization would become not merely a means of converting administrative processes into electronic form, but a modern public financial management mechanism aimed at maximizing the economic and social outcomes generated by each unit of budgetary funds.

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