

Deliverable D5.2

Learning and Recommendations Report - Post Phase 1

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Notes

Dissemination levels:

- PU = Public
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Introduction

The SILVER project has two primary objectives. The first is to develop and validate a generic model for a cross-border Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP) process in the participating countries. The second objective is to use the developed generic PCP process as a basis for running an actual specific call, to develop new technologies and services that will address the challenge of Supporting Independent Living for the elderly through Robotics.

The goal is to discover new robotic solutions, that when implemented in elderly care will make it possible to care for 10 % more care recipients in 2020 with the same number of care givers. The solutions should, also at the same time, increase the quality of life for the elderly, by making them more independent and improving their health.

The aim for SILVER's work package 2 is to gather existing experiences to create a generic, cross-border, European process for running PCP, including supporting guidelines, templates and artefacts which can be used for an actual PCP call in SILVER and in future PCP calls outside of the project.

While work package 2 will generate the best current view on how a transnational PCP scheme can be run it is expected that during the course of the actual PCP call in SILVER, further understanding will develop through the actual implementation of such a scheme. The objective of work package 5 is to capture learning points and to make recommendations both to the partners in the SILVER consortium and to others who may in the future wish to implement a similar process. The recommendations will also be applied to the generic PCP process document (D2.2) and template (D2.3) as work package 5 deliverables (D5.6 and D5.7).

The PCP process in SILVER is divided into three phases of respectively 6, 12 and 12 months duration. The first phase is a feasibility study of the selected technologies and proposals. The most promising ideas will be developed into well-defined prototypes in phase two. The third phase aims to verify and compare a first test production or services in real-life situations. The duration of SILVER is 56 months, running from 2012 – 2016.

The SILVER work package 5 that this report is a part of, focuses on making learning and recommendation reports from all three PCP phases in SILVER. The objective of this report is to collect the learning and recommendations from the first phase of the pre-commercial procurement (PCP) process in SILVER targeting the partners in SILVER and others who aspire to perform a PCP. The recommendations are gathered via a questionnaire answered by the members of the SILVER consortium and feedback from the contractors.

The report has been structured so that it describes learning within seven themes:

- EU funded PCP project
- SILVER management of the PCP projects
- Feedback on the process from the contractors
- Assessments of the phase 1 results
- Preparation of phase 2
- Assessment of bids for phase 2
- Next phase

The selected themes are part of the generic PCP process which has been developed in SILVER and described in details in deliverable D2.2: Generic Pre-Commercial Procurement Process.



EU funded PCP project

This PCP process is funded by the European Commission which means that there are specific rules, documentation demands and reviews attached to the project. Because of this many learning points from SILVER are based on that connection – which may not be the case for future users of this learning and recommendations report. This section will hence account for the overall learning points in regards to an EU funded PCP and in the following sections focus on a PCP in general.

The SILVER project has been challenged on time in regards to ongoing corrections to the SILVER PCP process documents. In order to comply with EU regulations and requirements the PCP process documents need to be reviewed by the European Commission and time needs to be allocated especially to this correction process in the project plan as well as the individual plans of the participants.

In general it is important that the plan for the whole PCP project clearly defines the level and content of involvement between the participants and the periods for when work is especially needed.

SILVER management of the PCP Projects

In phase 1 seven contractors were chosen to participate. After awarding the contracts for phase 1 the contractors managed their projects independently with ongoing contact with the Project Monitoring officer (PMO) from the SILVER consortium. The Project Monitoring officer made regular visits to the selected contractors, explained the rules, answered questions, checked progress/ milestones and assisted the procurers in the evaluation of the contractor's end of phase reports. The procurers from the SILVER consortium were also invited to the visits at the contractors as observers.

Contact between the SILVER consortium and the contractors

Due to the short 6 month phase 1 contract not many of the consortium members besides the Project Monitoring officer had contact with the contractors. The role of the Project Monitoring officer is hence important to secure the initial connection in this phase and align expectations and requirements.

When you only have one project participant with the primary contact to the contractors it makes the flow of information and contact more protected and standardised. You can also choose to include the contractors in relevant meetings with the other participants e.g. in the discussion of the testing procedures and facilitate the contact with the procurers.

In SILVER the contact between the contractors and the Project Monitoring officer went well and the contractors appreciated the connection and help. In the overall planning of the PCP project it is fruitful to involve the Project Monitoring officer early in the process and even as early as before phase 1 to ensure the connection with the contractors.

A questionnaire was sent to the contractors in the end of phase 1 asking about their experiences during this particular part of the PCP process. This proved to be a good learning as the contractors also appreciated the effort to get their input for the process. The result is outlined in the section: "Feedback on the process from the contractors".



Involvement of third parties

The project participants and the contractors can use the expertise of third parties especially if this expertise is lacking and/ or the work is too time consuming to solve in house.

The SILVER consortium did not use third parties in phase 1 as the consortium already consists of a wide range of knowledge and expertise, such as: procurers, public organisations and innovation agencies in the different countries.

A learning point from SILVER to be considered in future PCPs is to involve experts in product development. This could also be a valuable expertise to have as a part of the SILVER consortium.

The contractors were encouraged to involve end-users and some contractors used services to do this from a third party. Some of the contractors businesses are SMEs, which make it very valuable to involve a third party.

Cooperation between procurer and contractor

Cooperation between procurers and contractors during a development process is one of the most important factors for successful innovation.

In phase 1 of the SILVER PCP the contractors were issued a list of procurers who could help them in their inquiries. There was also the possibility to use the Q/A template.

As stated in the SILVER documents there will be more interaction between the contractors and the procurers in phase 2 where the prototypes will be produced and tested at a living lab of one of the SILVER partners. Interactions in phase 1 were limited because of the short time span of the phase 1 contract, the focus of the consortium on the review meetings and the changes to the documentation ready for phase 2.

You can however choose to develop this cooperation even further also in phase 1 – in regards to:

- Discuss and clarify requirements in the concept call documents
- Exchange ideas and input to enhance the innovation and value of product
- Ensure that the development of the products is going in the right directions
- Ensure that the management of the projects and the PCP process at large is reflecting both the needs of the procurers, the contractors and end-users.

The SILVER project experienced that there was a general consent between the partners in the consortium which is important not at least in the interaction with the contractors. If there is no joint understanding of the process in phase 1 and the requirements of the contractors it will be difficult to succeed and achieve good results with the PCP.

Involvement of end-users

As the actual users of the robotic solutions developed in the PCP process, end-users must be involved in the innovation process. You can encourage the contractors to do this with the help of a third party or to make a survey themselves.

In SILVER most of the contractors involved the end-users. Some of the contractors used the living lab MISTEL (Sweden) to help with the surveys and involvement of end-users. A learning point from SILVER is that had the phase 1 contract been longer than 6 months they could

have applied the results of the surveys even better. The end-users will however also be involved in phase 2.

The winning bids for phase 2 showed good knowledge of the end-users and also a feasible plan for how to continue the involvement.

Another learning point from SILVER is based on the fact that this PCP process is transnational whereas it could be valuable to ask the contractors to include considerations about the different cultures. Making “international personas” would be helpful which could be done by a third party if lacking the resources at the contractors businesses.

Feedback on the process from the contractors

In PCPs it is useful to conduct surveys among the contractors to get valuable information throughout the whole process.

In SILVER the contractors were provided with a questionnaire in the end of phase 1 asking them about their experiences with phase 1, the whole SILVER PCP and how the projects affected their businesses. This resulted in some overall learning and recommendations:

- All contractors found the participation in phase 1 and the PCP in general rewarding in relation to market research, feedback from end-users, way in to the European market, promotion etc.
- Phase 1 proved to be fruitful for all as the preparatory phase to conduct actual testing of prototypes
- The contractors found the overall control from the SILVER project management and the Project Monitoring officer to be good and helpful
- The elements mentioned that could be improved is mostly related to the delays of the project in regard to corrections of the SILVER PCP process documents and procedures due to the EC reviews. Also:
 - One contractor mentioned that the gap between phases could be minimised to enhance a fair competition
 - More dialogue and meetings with procurers and the consortium was requested (among others those working with time savings)
 - There were too many sources for information (also explained by the increased documentation demands as an EU funded PCP)
 - More freedom to describe solutions in the different forms was asked for

Assessment of the Phase 1 results

In the end of the first phase the results must be assessed. In SILVER, the end of phase reports from all the projects were submitted and assessed by the procurers in the SILVER Consortium with input from the Project Monitoring Officer.

The end of phase reports were assessed in terms of satisfactory completion time and quality of the work, as well as technical and commercial feasibility of the innovative solutions. A learning point from SILVER is that the actual progresses in the projects could have been specified even further in the end of phase reports to give a broader picture of the process and innovative achievements.

In the SILVER PCP the process went well and the end of phase reports gave the procurers a good overview of how the contractors met the demands and wishes of the SILVER PCP and the consortium. A learning point from SILVER is that it is important to take into consideration how to secure that the process, purpose and structure for these reports is clear to all involved parties.

Preparation of Phase 2

Preparing phase 2 entails making the call documents and instructing the assessors. In SILVER the call documents were subscribed to some changes needing to be made in accordance with the EC review, which prolonged the planned process. This resulted in the contractors only having two weeks to submit their bids.

When you prepare the call documents in the PCP process you should clearly specify which documentation the contractors need to include in their submission and make sure the contractors have sufficient time to deliver the required information. It must be clear to everyone involved what needs to be submitted and what will be assessed. In SILVER the contractors had to supply information in the SILVER templates which made the bids for phase 2 comparable to the assessors and thereby provided a fair review.

In SILVER it was not possible to do interviews with the contractors before the assessment because of the tight time schedule. A learning point is that this would have been helpful for the Decision Panel. To incorporate this in future PCP processes it is therefore important to make sure there is enough time allocated.

In the assessment process it is important to consider how many expert assessors and what kind of expertise is necessary to ensure that the whole PCP project is represented.. The overall experience in SILVER is that the assessment went well with the existing panel of experts, which covered the relevant areas of expertise.

Assessment of bids for Phase 2

The bids were assessed by the Decision Panel (experts and the procurers) at a meeting in London May 2014 using the process in the Phase 2 documentation. The assessment criteria were based on: 'Impact on challenge', 'Quality of the bid' and 'Price'.

The overall experience with the assessment process in SILVER was good. The panel was well prepared, the experts needed were present and the discussions about the bids in the Decision Panel went well.

In the SILVER PCP unanimity in the Decision Panel was needed in order to change the scores of the contractors provided by the expert assessors. This can result in some debate and be time consuming. On the other hand unanimity secures an equal and objective process which has been the focus of the SILVER PCP.

In future PCPs you should consider these pros and cons to decide which process is better for the specific PCP project.



Next phase

In phase 2 the chosen contractors will make prototypes of their products and test them at a living lab of one of the SILVER consortium members (Region of Southern Denmark).

One learning point from the first phase in the SILVER PCP for phase 2 is that it could be useful to let the contractors present their solutions in person in the end of the phase – as additional knowledge about the prototypes might be wished for by the Decision Panel.

