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TITLE PAGE**Title**

Strategic Purchasing in Practice: Comparing Ten European Countries.

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Highlights

- Strategic purchasing of health care is a widely adopted policy tool.
- The adjective “strategic” assumes definitional characteristics that are difficult to attain.
- None of the ten health care systems purchased strategically by any definition.
- Countries should be cognizant of difficulties in establishing strategic purchasing.
- Strategic purchasing can deliver policy outcomes only if it is successfully implemented.

Abstract

Strategic purchasing of health care services is widely recommended as a policy instrument. We conducted a review of literature of material drawn from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies *Health Systems in Transition* series, other European Observatory databases, and selected country-specific literature to augment the comparative analysis by providing the most recent healthcare trends in ten selected countries. There is little evidence of purchasing being strategic according to any of the established definitions. There is little or no literature suggesting that existing purchasing mechanisms in Europe deliver improved population health, citizen empowerment, stronger governance and stewardship, or develop purchaser organization and

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