

e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice Final Report

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Key Definitions

As used in this document, the concepts below have the following definitions.

Term	Definition
Contractual tools	Electronic mechanisms defined in the EU directives that can be used to rationalise repetitive procurement processes. For example, Digital Purchasing Systems and e-Auction Systems are contractual tools.
e-Procurement ¹	e-Procurement refers to the use of electronic communications and transaction processing by government institutions and other public sector organisations when buying supplies and services or tendering public works.
Procurement Phase	The e-Procurement process is divided into two e-Procurement phases, split by award of the contract: Pre-Award phase and Post-Award phase.
Pre-Award ¹	e-Procurement process phases occurring before the award of the contract (e-Notification, e-Access, e-Submission, e-Evaluation, e-Awarding).
Post-Award ¹	e-Procurement process phases occurring after the award of the contract (e-Ordering, e-Invoicing, e-Payment).
Functionalities (also known as e-Procurement services)	Generic term used to refer to processes, contractual tools and procedures provided by e-Procurement solutions.
Platform (also known as e-Procurement solution)	Web-based system that provides services to contracting authorities and economic operators for electronic public procurement.
Centralised public platform ¹	Public platforms providing centralized procurement services with framework agreements, at national, federal or regional level. Its services are often mandatory.
Non-centralised public platform ¹	Public platforms that do not provide centralized procurement services with framework agreements.
Private platform ¹	Private platforms offering a range of e-Procurement services.
Procedures	Methods for executing a procurement process based on the EU directives. Possible procedures are: open procedure, restricted procedure, negotiated procedure or competitive dialogue.

¹ As defined by IDC (2012) in 'D1 – e-Procurement Landscape Report- (MARKT 2011/097/C4/ST/OP LOT1). pp.77,120-127.

Term	Definition
Processes	Each e-Procurement phase can be divided into several processes e.g. the Pre-Award phase can be divided into e-Notification, e-Access or e-Submission.
Tender Specifications	Tender specifications refers to either calls for tenders or calls for expressions of interest.

Introduction



Background of the study

Increasing the use of electronic procurement (referred to as ‘e-Procurement’) is of strategic importance for achieving the smart and sustainable growth objective of the EU 2020 Strategy. First, it can significantly simplify the way procurement is conducted, deliver better procurement outcomes and save costs by improving the efficiency of public expenditure. According to a communication from the European Commission², Contracting authorities and Public entities that have already implemented e-Procurement report savings of between 5% and 20% of their procurement expenditure. The total size of the EU's procurement market is estimated to be more than 2 trillion euro, so each 5% saved could result in about 100 billion euro of savings per year. Additionally, it can improve the transparency and accessibility of tender opportunities and thus increase the participation of SMEs in public procurement procedures. Finally, it can contribute to stimulating greater competition across the Single Market and providing new sources of economic growth and jobs.

Since 2010, all the EU Member States have fully transposed the 2004 EU public procurement Directives and the majority of them have even adopted their optional provisions such as electronic auctions and dynamic purchasing systems (DPS). Starting around 2005, the European Commission assisted Member States in the Directives’ transposition through a dedicated action plan for the implementation of the legal framework. In 2010, the European Commission launched a green paper on expanding the use of e-Procurement in the EU, to review the overall situation and the results achieved.

Key fact

“less than 5% of total procurement budgets in the first-mover Member States is awarded through electronic systems.”

Despite e-Procurement now being enabled in all EU Member States’ national legislation and the fact that the infrastructure and tools are, in general, in place, the European Commission estimates that, on average, *“less than 5% of total procurement budgets in the first-mover Member States is awarded through electronic systems.”*³ Today, Europe is facing a significant gap between the availability and the use of e-Procurement solutions. This gap is even more perturbing given that the use of e-Government services is in general at a significantly higher level. According to Eurostat, the average usage of e-Procurement by enterprises in the 27 Member States only reached 13% in 2010, while the average usage of e-Government services was higher than 80% in the same year.

What could the present barriers preventing uptake of e-Procurement in Europe be? The European Commission has pointed out that the considerable variation in e-Procurement platforms and service models is a major obstacle to wide adoption of e-Procurement and an important barrier to cross-border and SME participation. e-Procurement platforms are often not user-friendly, and trying to access and learn how to use them is often particularly time-consuming, inefficient and frustrating for foreign economic operators.

² COM(2012) 179 final, Article 1, p.2.

³ COM(2010) 571 final, Article 1, p.2.

Key fact

There are valuable lessons to be learnt and there are e-Procurement good practices spread all over Europe.

In order to facilitate the uptake of e-Procurement in Europe, the European Commission proposed new Directives for public procurement in December 2011, introducing mandatory public e-Procurement after 2016 (including e-Tendering). Approval of these new Directives is expected by early 2013. These recent legislative proposals are, however, not on their own a sufficient condition for the successful implementation of e-Procurement in the European Union. A number of non-legislative flanking measures are needed in order to support Member States in their transition to full e-Procurement in a single market. Any such flanking measures or other future intervention by the Commission should be enhanced by lessons learnt in the 'field' so that it can be relevant and overcome current barriers efficiently and effectively.

While the average level of e-Procurement usage may still be low, there are valuable lessons to be learnt and good practices to be observed.

Purpose and Scope of the study

Purpose

Good practices are difficult to identify and there is a need to collect them and to make them available at a single point of access. Hence, to investigate what works well and what does not work so well, the European Commission has launched this study to test existing e-Procurement platforms in a thorough, hands-on, manner.

Ultimately the European Commission aims to help contracting authorities and economic operators successfully implement and improve their e-Procurement processes and to promote convergence towards common goals when investing in e-Procurement solutions.

Scope

The focus of the e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice has been on pre-award processes for above and below threshold procedures.

The results of this study are based on a restricted sample group and the study includes only items that have been observed among the tested platforms. This study does not aim to address all non-platform-related topics.

Methodology used to identify good practices

The e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice has been divided into three phases as illustrated in the figure below. Each phase is further detailed in the following sections.

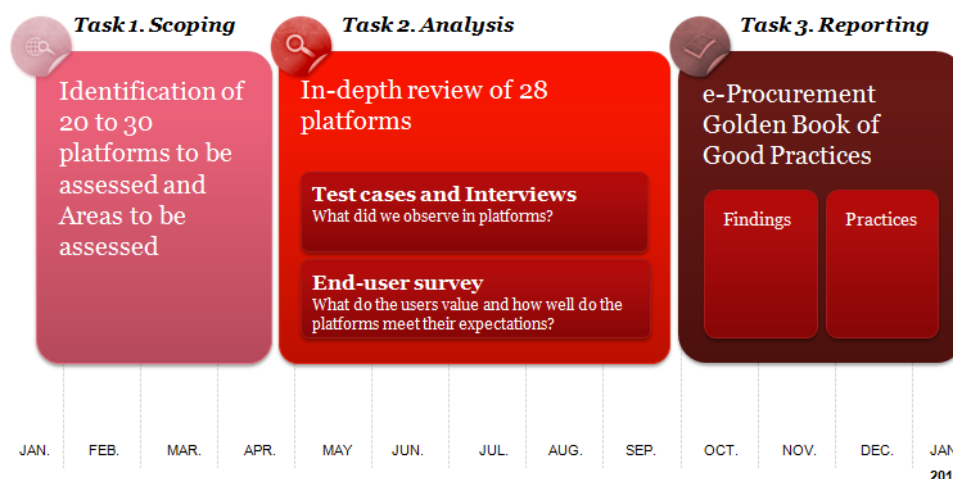


Figure 1 - Project phases

Task 1: Scoping

First, more than 300 existing e-Procurement platforms were identified on a pan-European level and compiled in a long list.

Next, in order to select the sample of platforms to be analysed in the next task, three types of selection criteria were applied sequentially to the long list of identified platforms operating in Europe:

- knock-out criteria;
- relevance criteria; and
- inclusion criteria.

Each one of the above criteria is further explained below.

Knock-out criteria

First a set of knock-out criteria were applied to the long list of e-Procurement platforms operating in Europe to reduce the number of platforms to be analysed:

- support of e-Submission functionality;
- relevance for public procurement; and
- platform uniqueness.

Relevance criteria

The remaining platforms were then further evaluated to determine their potential for good practices by applying the following two types of weighted relevance criteria:

- Potential:
 - platform processes and tools;
 - contractual tools; and
 - types of procedures.
- Coverage:
 - languages; and
 - on-line presence.

A sensitivity analysis was performed to identify platforms that are resilient to changes in the global weighting.

Inclusion criteria

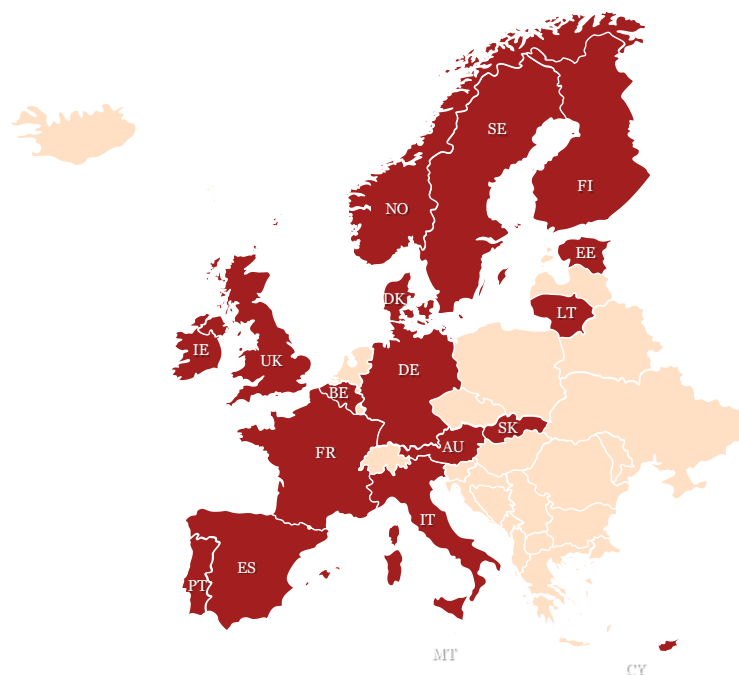
Finally, the following inclusion criteria were applied to ensure selection of a diverse and representative sample:

- geographic coverage;
- types of procurement;
- sectors/procurement verticals;
- participation models;
- e-Submission models;
- business models; and
- operating models.

The final set of selected platforms consisted of 28 platforms from 18 countries.

Key fact

We have tested 28 platforms from 18 countries



Task 2: Analysis

The set of platforms selected during task 1 were analysed in-depth based on the following 6 areas.

- Area 1: Context (context in which the assessment was carried out)
- Area 2: Visibility of the Platform (how the platforms plan to reach more visibility and increase user participation)
- Area 3: User accessibility (how easy it is to access platform services)
- Area 4: Usability/Ease of Use (implementation of e-Procurement functionalities in order to ease its use)
- Area 5: Cost and Benefit (development and operating costs in order to deliver the service)
- Area 6: Interoperability (third-party system interaction in order to facilitate the e-Procurement processes)

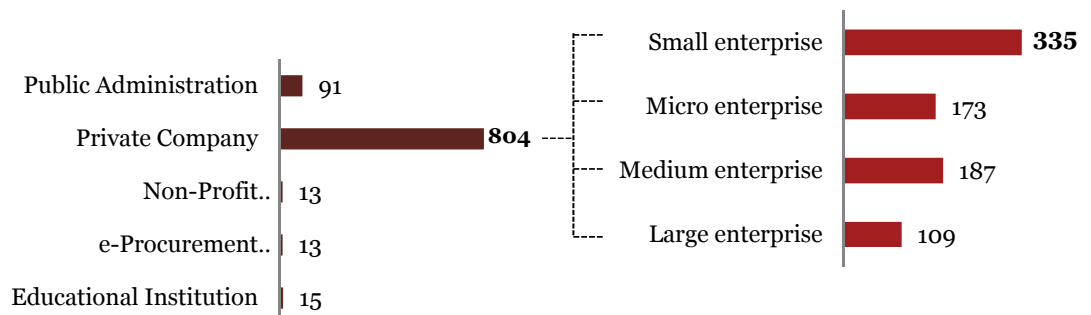
Information was collected from these 28 platforms by means of:

- Interviews of platform managers and technical personnel
- Running test cases on the platforms in the role of an economic operator
- Running test cases on the platforms in the role of a contracting authority

Key fact

We have surveyed 936 platform users from 25 different countries. The majority of the respondents are SMEs.

Finally 936 platform users from 25 different countries were surveyed to collect the opinions of platform users. As shown in the figure below, a majority of those respondents were SMEs. Further details on the results of the survey can be found on the project blog⁴.



⁴ <http://www.pwcblogs.be/eProcGoldenBook/?p=328>

Task 3: Reporting

In the final phase of this study, the findings that were collected during task 2 were reviewed, consolidated and formulated into practices.

In order to, as much as possible, avoid subjectivity and to formulate judgments on accepted terms, each finding was assessed using a set of judgment criteria. In this exercise, a set of six business objectives that have been defined by the Commission Expert Group on e-Tendering (eTEG)⁵ were used as judgment criteria. These business objectives are further detailed in the table below.

Table 1: Business objectives as defined by eTEG are used as judgment criteria

Judgment criteria ⁶	Definition
Enhance accessibility for SMEs	e-Tendering solutions need to be efficient and easy to use for small and medium-sized enterprises. This is a prerequisite to allowing participation by all stakeholders in public procurement procedures. To date, SMEs have largely been left out of the public procurement dynamics due to the investment that is required of them to keep up with appropriate business opportunities and gain access to the resources that are needed to submit a tender.
Ensure legal certainty & confidence	Ensuring legal certainty and confidence is essential in order to achieve widespread acceptance and use of electronic tendering processes among CAs and EOs. Recommendations range from the need for national information campaigns, clarifying e-Tendering solution characteristics and choosing standards enabling interoperability. Ensuring legal certainty involves removing ambiguity, increasing security and providing guidance on how to understand and implement the regulations on use of electronic means in the procurement directive. Confidence can be built through the examples of leading public procurement organisations and professionals within MSs using electronic solutions in their day-to-day operations.
Remove barriers to cross-border tendering	One of the key objectives of e-Tendering systems is to allow and encourage EOs to submit their offers for tenders launched in regions and countries different from those they usually operate in. Cross-border bidding will avoid fragmentation of the market, increase market transparency and facilitate competition, resulting in a better quality of services and lower prices.
Promote transparency & accountability	Promoting transparency and accountability is required not only to allow better, equal access to public procurement but also to secure paper-free processes and allow CAs to build procurement strategies based on analysis of past events.

⁵ The eTEG is an initiative of DG MARKT aimed at developing a blueprint for common e-tendering/e-submission solutions. The vision of eTEG is based upon specific business goals which are briefly illustrated in this section. For more information, please refer to DG MARKT's website: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement/expert/index_en.htm.

⁶ As defined by eTEG Business objectives

Judgment criteria ⁶	Definition
Improve usability and efficiency	e-Tendering means increased efficiency for both CAs and the EOs, as described above under the vision. To foster widespread e-Tendering take-up, it is necessary to show concrete benefits to the players in terms of effectiveness and efficiency gains. IT technologies enable procurement players to meet the general procurement requirements (transparency, accountability, confidentiality, etc.) with more efficient control mechanisms. It is necessary to come up with tools that are efficient, and designed to be easily used by the procurement actors in a new coherent process that does not unnecessarily replicate paper-based procedures.
Support change management	Supporting change management is key to implementing e-Tendering. Paper-based processes that might have been efficient for decades must be transferred to electronic-based processes in order to make the most of e-Tendering. This cannot be done in one go and there are both objective and psychological factors that cause resistance to change from procurement actors. Transition to e-Tendering is not just an IT project. Rather, it is about rethinking procurement as a whole, relying on IT as the mainstream foundation for the process. It requires a strategy at policy level and adequate communication and support initiatives targeted at the procurement players.

The practices were also rated based on the same judgment criteria, and finally the practices were validated through public review⁷ as well as detailed reviews⁸ from selected national experts. The final results are also available online on DG MARKET's web pages⁹.

⁷ <http://www.pwcblogs.be/eProcGoldenBook/?p=505>

⁸ <http://www.pwcblogs.be/eProcGoldenBook/?p=477>

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement/golden-book/index_en.htm

Catalogue

of e-Procurement Good Practices



Catalogue of e-Procurement Good Practices

This chapter presents an overview of the good practices that have been extracted, classified and organised into a catalogue of good practices. As explained in Chapter 1, the information contained in the presented practices is based on observations and lessons learnt from an in-depth assessment of 28 e-Procurement platforms in 18 European countries.

Each practice presented in the catalogue contains the below information.

Table 2: Overview of fields used to detail each e-Procurement good practice

Field	Description
Name	This field contains the practice title.
Practice ID	This field is intended for Commission internal use only. It links back to the origin of the practice, indicating the tested area and ID of related finding.
Summary	This field provides an explanation of the practice. The summary follows the following structure: <i>“Platforms that apply this practice (...)”</i> – answers to the question <i>“what”</i> . <i>“This way, (...)”</i> – answers to the question <i>“why”</i> .
Anecdote	This field includes an anecdote from the testing. The purpose is to better convey the experience that the study team has lived through during the testing of e-Procurement platforms.
DO’s	This field indicates what platforms implementing the practice should do.
DON’Ts	This field indicates what platforms implementing the practice should avoid.
This practice concerns	This field indicates which pre-award e-Procurement processes are concerned by the practice.
Practice rating	This field indicates the average rating of the practice calculated from the number of stars (1-5) awarded per judgment criteria.
Objectives	This field provides an overview of how relevant the practice is for each business objective ¹⁰ by awarding between one and five stars along with a rationale behind the rating.
Legend	This field explains the legend used when rating the practice.

¹⁰ As explained in chapter 1, the business objectives that are used as judgment criteria were defined by eTEG

Field	Description
This practice has been observed in	<p>This field indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how many countries; • how many e-Procurement platforms; and • in the type of platforms¹¹ that the practice has been observed in.
Related practice	This field cross-references related practices.

The table below an overview of the e-Procurement good practices and the following section further details each practice.

¹¹ As detailed in the key definitions section, platform types as defined by LOT1 of this study have been used.

Table 3 – Catalogue of e-Procurement Good Practices

Practice title	Judgement criteria					
	Enhance accessibility for SMEs	Ensure legal certainty & confidence	Facilitate cross-border tendering	Promote transparency & accountability	Improve usability and efficiency	Support change management
Practice 1: Platforms automatically transmit all their notices to a single point of access for publication	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Practice 2: Economic operators and contracting authorities benefit from affordable training plans	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Practice 3: Platforms have communication plans in place to promote the use of e-Procurement	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Practice 4: Economic operators can access and retrieve contract notices and tender specifications as anonymous users	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Practice 5: Economic operators can register on the platform without having to provide country-specific information	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 6: Economic operators complete their registration on a platform by clicking an activation link sent by email	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 7: Platforms support English in addition to the official language(s) of the member state(s) where they operate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Practice 8: Economic operators can use a username and a password to log in to a platform	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 9: Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 10: Economic operators can evaluate whether tender specifications are relevant for them based on information available in contract notices	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 11: Economic operators are notified of any changes to tender specifications	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Practice 12: Platforms support automatic transmission of all types of notices to TED	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Practice 13: Economic operators and contracting authorities can search CPV categories based on their code or their description	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 14: Contracting authorities can re-use information contained in their profile or in previous notices to create contract notices, tender specifications and award notices	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Practice 15: Economic operators can choose to manually or electronically sign a submission report containing the hash value of each submitted document	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Practice 16: Economic operators receive a proof of delivery upon successful submission of their tender	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Practice 17: Economic operators can resubmit their tenders up until the submission deadline	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Practice 18: Platforms keep tenders encrypted until the opening session	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★

Practice 19: Contracting authorities can evaluate part of their tenders automatically based on pre-defined criteria	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 20: Platforms use European e-Signature validation services to validate e-Signatures during e-Submission	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 21: Platforms clearly indicate all costs related to use of the platform	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★
Practice 22: Economic operators can create tenders using a core set of structured data and unstructured documents	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Practice 23: Economic operators have the freedom to choose the platform of their preference without being locked in by the choice of the contracting authority	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Practice 24: Platforms use standard specifications to structure their data and to promote interoperability	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
 ★|-----|★★★★

Practice 1: Platforms automatically transmit all their notices to a single point of access for publication

Practice ID

A2-01-02

Practice rating

4.67 / 5

Summary







Platforms that apply this practice also make their contract notices and award notices, including award notices of direct awards, available at a single point of access (SPoA). The contract notices indicate clearly the platforms on which the tender specifications are available. The SPoA can either be a central platform or it can aggregate notices from all other platforms. The SPoA is free to use, searchable and does not require registration. There can be more than one SPoA per country, as long as each SPoA presents all notices.

This way, it is possible for economic operators to find all contract and award notices below and above threshold at all administrative levels (central, regional and local) through an SPoA. By also publishing notices for direct awards, transparency and accountability can be improved.




Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms that are driven by national governments collect notices from regional governments or from municipalities and publish them on their platform. As a result, these platforms act as national single points of access (SPoA). We also found that, when this happens in a country with several official languages, the notices that the SPoAs collect are in a mixture of those different languages. So, in fact, we found language barriers even within some national borders.

DOs

- include in notices a clickable URL pointing to the platform where the tender specifications are available for download
Related objective(s): 
- show clearly the price of the call for tender documents if they are not available free of charge
Related objective(s): 
- indicate clearly the submission deadline with a date, time and time zone
Related objective(s): 
- make publication at the SPoA as automatic as possible to avoid double encoding
Related objective(s): 
- publish contract award notices also for direct awards
Related objective(s): 
- make notices sent to the SPoA as similar as possible to those sent to TED
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't omit information about where the call for tenders is available for download
Related objective(s): 
- don't provide a submission period (number of days) instead of a submission deadline (date, time and time zone)
Related objective(s): 
- don't require registration to retrieve notices
Related objective(s): 

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★


SMEs can find all the opportunities on a single platform, which makes the opportunities more accessible.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★


The existence of a SPoA increases economic operator confidence in e-Procurement.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★

Accessing all contract notices from one place increases the visibility of contract opportunities for foreign economic operators who might not know individual contracting authorities as well as national economic operators.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★

A SPoA gives better and more equal access to public procurement.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

A SPoA reduces the time spent by economic operators on looking for contract notices.

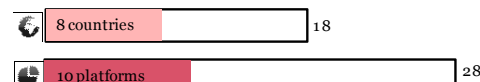
 **Support change management** ★★★★★

Contract notices are the starting point for e-Submission.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 12

Platforms support automatic transmission of all types of notices to TED

Practice 2: Economic operators and contracting authorities benefit from affordable training plans

Practice ID **A2-02-02** Practice rating **4.33 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice entice economic operators and contracting authorities to use e-Procurement. The training courses for economic operators may be delivered by the platforms, contracting authorities or other organisations such as chambers of commerce. The platforms should also be as user-friendly as possible to minimise the need for training.

This way, economic operators and contracting authorities are educated on the use of electronic procurement platforms and can learn more quickly about the benefits of using e-Procurement platforms.

Anecdote

What we have found is that there is no common interface among the tested platforms. This meant that, even after testing 27 platforms, there was still no straightforward or intuitive way of understanding how to use the 28th platform that we tested. Hence, we found that training was useful in order to gain a quicker understanding of how to make best use of the functionalities provided by the platform.

DOs

- make the courses affordable
Related objective(s):
- make the platform as user-friendly as possible to minimise the need for training
Related objective(s):
- host joint sessions between economic operators and contracting authorities
Related objective(s):
- make the courses hands-on
Related objective(s):
- include information about the EU legal Procurement framework and national framework in the courses
Related objective(s):
- offer the courses online
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't make the courses a selling pitch
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★★

Affordable courses helps SMEs to use the platform. Using chambers of commerce and other professional organisations makes the training courses available in different geographic areas.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

Having proper training plans, delivered by official representatives, increases the confidence of economic operators.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★★

Training courses are usually part of local or national strategies, where cross-border bidding is not often taken into account. However, providing courses online could help reach foreign economic operators.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★

Training courses is neutral to the transparency of public procurement.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Using chambers of commerce and business organisations to promote the use of electronic procurement platforms is more efficient than promoting these training courses from the platforms themselves. Use of these networks increases involvement and trust by economic operators.

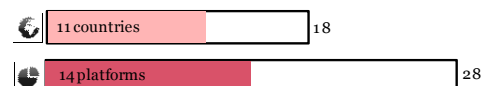
Support change management ★★★★★

The delivery of training courses accelerates the uptake of e-Procurement.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice **Practice 3**

Platforms have communication plans in place to promote the use of e-Procurement

Practice 3: Platforms have communication plans in place to promote the use of e-Procurement

Practice ID A2-02-03 Practice rating 4 / 5

Summary






Platforms that apply this practice run a communication programme involving their website, commercial advertising or news items in specialist publications.

This way, it is possible to raise awareness and confidence among users about the platform and e-Procurement as a whole.



Anecdote

What we have found is that platforms driven by private companies invest more in commercial advertising than platforms driven by public administrations.

DOs

- promote the use of e-Procurement platforms by reporting success stories
Related objective(s): 
- use social media and traditional media to advertise the platform
Related objective(s): 
- take into consideration economic operators beyond national borders by making promotional information available in other languages
Related objective(s): 
- involve chambers of commerce and other similar organisations in promotion of the platform
Related objective(s): 
- promote affordable events
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't only target contracting authorities
Related objective(s): 
- don't forget to mention the value of e-Procurement as a whole
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★


SMEs need more information and guidance on using e-Procurement platforms to overcome their reluctance, a good communication strategy will enhance accessibility for SMEs, in particular if it includes some affordable events targeted at SMEs.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★


Publications in specialist publications or official journals constitute a tacit third-party endorsement of the platform, which reinforces the confidence that can be placed in the platform.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★

Foreign economic operators need more information and guidance on using cross-border e-Procurement platforms; a good communication strategy will enhance cross-border bidding. Communication plans can also involve tailored activities to enhance cross-border bidding.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★

Communication surrounding the platform increases the overall transparency of the procurement process and the working of the platform.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★

Communication surrounding the platform is neutral to usability and efficiency.

 **Support change management** ★★★★

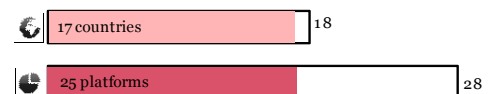
Information about e-Procurement will help raise awareness on the benefits and the working of e-Procurement, which will support change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 2

Economic operators and contracting authorities benefit from affordable training plans

Practice 4: Economic operators can access and retrieve contract notices and tender specifications as anonymous users

Practice ID

A3-01-03

Practice rating

4.5 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice remove technical and administrative pre-requisites and barriers to accessing tender specifications.

This way, it is possible to significantly ease access to calls for tenders and make public procurement more accessible.

Anecdote

What we have found is that there are different approaches to giving access to contract notices and tender specifications. In a platform, we had to install a Java application in order to be able to access tender specifications.

DOs

- offer light registration (email address only) to economic operators that want to keep up to date about changes to tender specifications
Related objective(s):
- offer light registration (email only) to economic operators that wish to ask the contracting authority questions
Related objective(s):
- provide access to calls for tenders through a web browser
Related objective(s):
- offer the possibility for economic operators to ask questions to the contracting authority
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't make registration mandatory to retrieve contract notices or tender specifications
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to browse through several webpages to retrieve all the documents in a call for tenders
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to purchase digital certificates before being able to access tender specifications
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to provide certified translated copies of attestations or other forms of evidence before being able to access tender specifications
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to register before being able to access tender specifications
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to install applications before being able to access tender specifications
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★★

Lowering administrative and technical barriers increases the participation of SMEs in public procurement.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

If contract notices and calls for tenders are easily accessible, economic operators can decide more quickly whether to participate in the tender process.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★★

Lowering administrative and technical barriers increases cross-border participation.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★★

Allowing anonymous access to contract notices and calls for tenders increases the transparency of the overall tender process.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Economic operators have all the information they require to decide whether they will participate in a specific process without being required to submit their credentials.

Support change management ★★★★★

Lowering administrative and technical barriers engages economic operators and enlarges the basis of e-Procurement participation.

Legend

Undermines objective

Supports objective



This practice has been observed in

6 countries 18

9 platforms 28

- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 9

Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria

Practice 5: Economic operators can register on the platform without having to provide country-specific information

Practice ID

A3-02-01

Practice rating

4 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice make country-specific information optional in the registration process. Platforms also simplify the registration step by requesting information that economic operators can provide without consulting third parties, such as Certification Authorities, chambers of commerce or other business organisations.

This way, it is possible to avoid foreign economic operators being prevented from registering.

Anecdote

What we have found is that it was very tricky, in some cases even impossible, as a cross-border economic operator to register on some platforms.

We have found, for example, cases where we had to select our country of origin from a drop-down menu which consisted of only one possible option.

We have also encountered cases where we had to provide national identifiers, such as national VAT- or social security numbers. Validation checks on those fields prevented us from using shortcuts, such as generated numbers or other dummy values. In some cases use of workarounds was possible, but we found that the use of workarounds reduces the confidence in the platform.

We have also been forced to buy certificates to be able to access some of the platforms. In addition, we were not able to re-use any of the bought certificates in other platforms and were consequently forced to buy multiple certificates and smartcards.

Finally, to be able to register, we sometimes had to provide paper documents by post, scanned images of those documents and even certified translations of official documents. In any of these cases, the registration process became both lengthy and costly.

Worthy to mention is that we have found that many of the platforms owners were not aware of the barriers their platform introduced to cross-border economic operators.

DOs

- clearly indicate which fields are mandatory, and which are not
Related objective(s):
- protect user data according to EU personal data protection directives
Related objective(s):
- simplify the registration process by reducing the number of mandatory fields and the number of steps required to complete registration
Related objective(s):
- indicate clearly how long the registration process normally takes
Related objective(s):
- perform validation checks on the requested information where possible
Related objective(s):
- provide clear error messages to the user when data is missing or violates validation rules
Related objective(s):
- provide clear guidance on how to correctly fill in the form
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to use OpenID or other digital identity services
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to choose their username and password
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't require a digital certificate to register on the platform
Related objective(s):
- don't require individuals representing economic operators to provide evidence of their relationship to the economic operator (during the registration process)
Related objective(s):
- don't require a full extract from the business register to register on the platform
Related objective(s):
- don't require a power of attorney to register on the platform
Related objective(s):
- don't require a copy of the identity or citizen card to register in the platform
Related objective(s):
- don't require information that is not absolutely necessary for the registration process, e.g. mobile phone number
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to provide identifiers or other data specific to the country where the platform operates
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to consult third parties such as Certification Authorities, chambers of commerce or other business organisations to register on the platform
Related objective(s):
- don't count on workarounds for foreign economic operators to be able to register
Related objective(s):
- don't oblige economic operators to fill in the complete registration form again if an error occurs due to violation of validation rules
Related objective(s):

Objectives

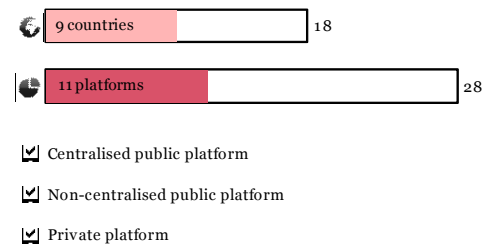
- Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★
Using a simplified online form facilitates SME registration, as they do not need to purchase any other item such as a digital certificate or collect additional documentation from third-party organisations.
- Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★
Mandating country-specific fields in the registration process is neutral to legal certainty or confidence.
- Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★
Making country-specific fields optional allows foreign economic operators to participate in tender processes.
- Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★
Eliminating country-specific fields from the registration process promotes an equal footing among economic operators and therefore improves the overall transparency of the process.
- Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★
Eliminating country-specific fields from registration reduces the time necessary to complete registration.
- Support change management** ★★★
Mandating country-specific fields in the registration process is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



Related practice Practice 6

Economic operators complete their registration on a platform by clicking an activation link sent by email

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Practice 6: Economic operators complete their registration on a platform by clicking an activation link sent by email

Practice ID **A3-07-02** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow users to complete their registration process by clicking a unique URL that is sent to them in an activation email. This email address is provided by the user in the registration process.




This way, it is possible to ensure that the email provided by users during their registration is valid.

Anecdote




What we found is that most platforms use email to communicate with economic operators. Nevertheless, we found platforms that do not perform any control on the validity of the email address provided by the economic operator before granting full access to the platform.

We also encountered a platform that required a contract to be printed and manually signed. The contract had to be sent by post, fax or scanned email. This process was lengthy and we found that sending scanned paper by email does not provide any benefits, such as improved security.

DOs

- include a clickable URL which includes a unique hash or activation key in the activation email
Related objective(s): 
- limit the activation time-frame, it should expire if not clicked within a reasonable time period
Related objective(s): 
- require the economic operator to provide a valid email account
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't grant access until the account has been activated
Related objective(s): 
- don't require a digital certificate to complete the registration process
Related objective(s): 
- don't require economic operators to send a form by post to complete the registration process
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★


This type of activation is neutral for SME accessibility.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★


There is a unique hash in the activation email which ensures that the economic operator receiving it is the one that created the account on the platform.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★

This type of activation is neutral for foreign economic operators.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★

Using this type of activation mechanism ensures that economic operators have access to their registered email account. This makes it possible to gather correct information for contracting authorities and creates accountability in the registration process.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

The economic operator can activate its account by using the information received in the email, and so the process is secure and efficient.

 **Support change management** ★★★

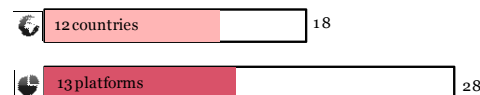
Account activation is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective **Supports objective**

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 5

Economic operators can register on the platform without having to provide country-specific information

Practice 7: Platforms support English in addition to the official language(s) of the member state(s) where they operate

Practice ID **A3-09-03** Practice rating **4 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice make the user interface available in at least English in addition to their official language(s).

This way, it is possible to make access easier for foreign economic operators, because English is the "de facto" business language in Europe.





Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms are only available in the official language of the country where they operate, complicating access for cross-border economic operators. Some of them even prevented us from being able to use automated translation tools to translate the pages.



We have also found that most of the notices and tender specifications were only available in the official language of the country. This was true even in platforms where the interface was available in English.

We have also encountered a platform that relied on the browser configuration to set the language automatically in the interface.

DOs

- ensure that translations are of good quality and complete
Related objective(s): 
- provide phone numbers and other contact points that are accessible from abroad
Related objective(s): 
- support the languages of all the regions of your country
Related objective(s): 
- consider the trade-off between increased use of the platform by supporting additional languages and the effort to maintain them
Related objective(s): 







DON'Ts

- don't limit translations to English; consider also translating into the language(s) of your neighbouring country/ies
Related objective(s): 
- don't leave your platform monolingual
Related objective(s): 

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

-  **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★
SMEs are able to understand the platform and identify the presence of relevant contract notices.
-  **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★
Understanding the user interface increases confidence.
-  **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★
Economic operators from cross-border countries are able to understand the platform and participate.
-  **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★
Multilingual interfaces makes the platform accessible to more people.
-  **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★
Most economic operators can use the platform when the user interface is available in their own language or English.
-  **Support change management** ★★★
It is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 1

Platforms automatically transmit all their notices to a single point of access for publication

Practice 8: Economic operators can use a username and a password to log in to a platform

Practice ID **A3-12-01** Practice rating **4.17 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow economic operators to log in with a simple set of credentials, such as username and password.

As a result, it is possible to facilitate access for registered economic operators.

Anecdote

What we found is that some platforms allow multiple log-in options, allowing the user to choose among using their national e-ID cards, qualified certificates, or username and password.

We also encountered a platform that claimed to support OpenID. However, when testing the platform, we found that it was not supported.

DOs

- implement a strong password policy
Related objective(s):
- provide a password recovery functionality to users
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to use OpenID or other digital identity services
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't require the use of digital certificates to log in to the platform
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

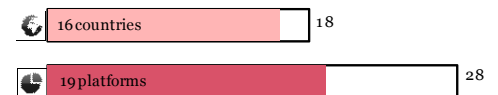
Objectives

- Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★
There are no extra cost or technical skills required to use a username and password.
- Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★
The use of a username and password is widely implemented in similar contexts.
- Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★
The use of a username and password is not a barrier to cross-border access.
- Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★
The use of a username and password is neutral for the transparency and accountability of the platform.
- Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★
The use of a username and password does not require the installation of hardware devices, software or certificates.
- Support change management** ★★★
The use of a username and password is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective | Supports objective
★ |—————| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 5

Economic operators can register on the platform without having to provide country-specific information

Practice 9: Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria

Practice ID

A4-01-01

Practice rating

4.17 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice support advanced search with at least the following searchable criteria:

- the name of the contracting authority
- the object of the contract
- the type of contract (goods, services, or works)
- the publication date
- the submission deadline
- the place of delivery
- the contract value

This way, it is possible for economic operators to easily find contract notices.

Anecdote

What we have found is that it is useful to have a combination between free text-based search and drop-down menus that allows choosing dates, locations, amounts and classification of the deliverables. This kind of combination allowed us to restrict the search to contract notices interesting for us.

We have also found that some platforms offer only a text-based search on the tender opportunities. Although we found that this kind of search functionality is easy and simple, it is also language-specific and it prevented us from getting a full overview of the available contract notices.

We have even found a platform that does not offer any search functionality at all. All contract notices were simply displayed in a long list that extended over multiple pages, leaving us to either scroll though this list or to use the national SPoA (or TED) to search for the contract notices above threshold.

DOs

- allow economic operators to search for contract notices based on submission deadline using date, time and time zone
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to search for contract notices based on a range of dates and a range of contract values
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to search for contract notices based on CPV codes for the subject-matter of contracts
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to search for contract notices based on NUTS codes for the place of delivery
Related objective(s):
- support free-text search for the subject-matter of the contract and contracting authority name
Related objective(s):
- indicate clearly in the search results, by means of a short text or icon, whether the tenders can be submitted electronically
Related objective(s):
- allow economic operators to save a default set of search criteria
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't provide a long list of contract notices which cannot be searched or filtered
Related objective(s):
- don't provide a submission period (number of days) instead of a submission deadline (date, time and time zone)
Related objective(s):
- don't make basic search a chargeable service
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

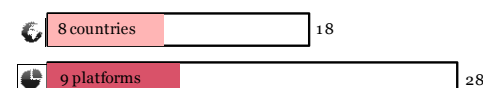
Objectives

- Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★
SMEs can search contract notices according to their needs.
- Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★
Search is neutral to legal certainty and confidence.
- Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★
Foreign economic operators can search contract notices according to their needs. The use of standard controlled vocabularies allows economic operators to search the same way on different platforms.
- Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★
Economic operators are able to find contract notices using familiar criteria. This increases transparency.
- Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★
The use of controlled vocabularies allows economic operators to search the same way on different platforms, significantly reducing the learning curve and improving visibility.
- Support change management** ★★★
Search is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in











- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice



Practice 10

Economic operators can evaluate whether tender specifications are relevant for them based on information available in contract notices

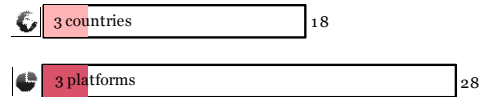
DOs

- make contract notices on the platform as similar as possible to those sent to TED and to the SPoA
Related objective(s): 
- indicate whether the tenders can be submitted electronically by means of a short text or an icon in the contract notices
Related objective(s): 
- include a clickable URL to the tender documents
Related objective(s): 
- include a direct link to the Official Journal
Related objective(s): 
- indicate the currency of the contract value
Related objective(s): 
- indicate submission deadline using date, time and time zone
Related objective(s): 
- indicate the subject-matter of the contracts based on CPV codes
Related objective(s): 
- indicate the place of delivery based on NUTS codes
Related objective(s): 

DON'Ts

- don't provide a submission period (number of days) instead of a submission deadline (date, time and time zone)
Related objective(s): 
- don't neglect to provide a legend for icons which are not clearly understandable across Europe
Related objective(s): 

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 9

Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Practice 11: Economic operators are notified of any changes to tender specifications

Practice ID

A4-09-01

Practice rating

4 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice notify interested parties, and publish on the platform, changes to published tender specifications or to a bidding procedure. Such changes could include questions and answers, corrigenda, extra documents, etc. Interested parties can access the changes without registering or choose to be notified, preferably by email and free of charge, following light registration.

This way, it is possible for economic operators to stay updated on the tender specifications of interest to them.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms require the economic operators to be registered in order to have access to the calls for tenders documents. Some platforms also notify about changes in the tender specifications automatically to all the economic operators that have downloaded them. We found that this was ineffective due to the sheer amount of emails we received without requesting the information and without being able to unsubscribe. We also received email notifications from a platform on each step of the process until the awarding. Although this was in itself a useful feature, it was again implemented without possibility to un-subscribe.

We have also found that some notifications include information about the existence change to a call for tenders but without including information on where the change has been made, leaving us to, for each notification, search through the entire call for tenders to identify what has changed.

We have also found a platform where anonymous access to the tender specifications was supported with the option to provide an email address to be informed about changes.

DOs

- allow economic operators to provide contact information without having to register if they want to be notified of changes, preferably by email
Related objective(s):
- send notifications only to economic operators who have expressed an interest in being informed
Related objective(s):
- support the aggregation of notifications in one email for all tender specifications the economic operator is interested in
Related objective(s):
- include in notifications a link allowing the recipient to opt to no longer receive notifications
Related objective(s):
- include detailed information on the changes in the notifications
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't use contact information provided by economic operators for being notified of changes for other purposes
Related objective(s):
- don't send notifications to economic operators who have not expressed an interest in being informed
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★★

SMEs cannot afford to continuously monitor e-Procurement platforms for changes to the tender specifications of interest them. Direct and affordable notifications to interested parties will ensure SMEs are not left behind.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

Direct, affordable notifications to interested parties will prevent confusion and ambiguity with regard to changes, which will reduce non-compliance.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★★

Direct, affordable notifications to interested parties will ensure foreign economic operators are not left behind. Foreign economic operators can easily be missing information about changes to procedures abroad.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★★

Publication and free notification of changes ensure full transparency.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Direct notification of changes is less time-consuming for economic operators than having to monitor the platform for changes.

Support change management ★★★

Change notifications are neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective

Supports objective

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in

16 countries 18

18 platforms 28

Centralised public platform

Non-centralised public platform

Private platform

Related practice

Practice 16

Economic operators receive a proof of delivery upon successful submission of their tender

Practice 12: Platforms support automatic transmission of all types of notices to TED

Practice ID **A4-11-03** Practice rating **4 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice make it possible for contracting authorities to publish all types of notices automatically on TED, the Official Journal of the European Union.

This way, it is possible for contracting authorities to increase the visibility of their tender specifications without having to encode the same information twice.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms have implemented the interface for creating contract notices to resemble the forms of the Official Journal. We found that, for people used to work with such forms, this lowers the learning curve when moving to electronic procurement.

We also found a platform that does not support automatic publishing of contract notices on TED. Instead the contracting authorities have to re-encode notices on TED in order to be compliant with EU Directives.

DOs

- implement an interface to TED eSenders
Related objective(s):
- automate publication of any changes to the original notice on TED
Related objective(s):
- publish all contract award notices, including those for direct award contracts
Related objective(s):
- make it possible for the contracting authority to also use TED for contracts below the threshold
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't oblige the contracting authority to manually re-encode the contract notice on TED
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

- Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★
SMEs rarely use more than two platforms to search for opportunities, and so publishing contract notices on TED increases accessibility to public procurement.
- Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★
The publication of contract opportunities is neutral to legal certainty or confidence.
- Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★
The geographic coverage of an e-Procurement platform is mostly national, and so economic operators benefit from publication of notices on TED, the single point of access at European level.
- Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★
Publishing notices on TED improves access to public procurement.
- Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★
Automating the publication of notices to TED leads to significant financial and time savings for contracting authorities. Economic operators will also benefit from more notices on TED and therefore spend less time looking for them.
- Support change management** ★★★★
Automating the publication of notices is a quick win for contracting authorities.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 1

Platforms automatically transmit all their notices to a single point of access for publication

Practice 13: Economic operators and contracting authorities can search CPV categories based on their code or their description

Practice ID **A4-14-02** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow contracting authorities and economic operators to search commodity classification categories based on Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes or using close match of their description. The CPV codes can be used to search contract notices and to create new contract notices.

This way, it is possible to ease selection of the desired CPV category, resulting in more accurate and more frequent use of CPV categories.




Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms support searching and selecting CPV categories only by browsing through a CPV tree. We found that such CPV trees are inconvenient and time-consuming to browse through.



We have also found a platform that only supports search of CPV categories by manually entering an exact CPV code with no legend or list of codes available to help explain the codes.

We also encountered a platform that provides an easy to use CPV search based on codes or on close match of the description.

DOs

- return all the items within a category and its sub-categories following a search
Related objective(s): 
- show the number of items contained within each matching category and its sub-categories, if a CPV tree is used
Related objective(s): 
- help users to select the right CPV code(s)
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't require the economic operator or the contracting authority to browse through the CPV tree to select a category
Related objective(s): 
- don't require the economic operator or the contracting authority to know the CPV structure
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★


Because SMEs are not familiar with CPV classification, being able to select the appropriate CPV code(s) based on word search will increase the use of CPV codes by SMEs, leading to better search results.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★


The CPV code selection method is neutral for legal certainty and confidence.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★


The possibility to select appropriate CPV code(s) based on code search removes the language barrier present in code descriptions.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★

The CPV code selection method is neutral for transparency and accountability.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

Offering several possibilities to select CPV codes can increase use of CPV codes by suppliers searching for opportunities, leading to more accurate search results. It can also reduce the time necessary to select code(s) when the contracting authority creates a notice.


 **Support change management** ★★★

The CPV code selection method is neutral for change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in

 10 countries 18

 10 platforms 28

- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 9

Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria

Practice 14: Contracting authorities can re-use information contained in their profile or in previous notices to create contract notices, tender specifications and award notices

Practice ID **A4-15-01** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow contracting authorities to create new tender specifications using forms which can be partially pre-filled with information contained in the profile of the contracting authority. Information from previous contract notices and tender specifications can also be saved as templates. The contracting authority can create, edit and save changes to templates.

This way, it is possible for contracting authorities to save time while preparing their tenders.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms allow the contracting authority to save, edit and re-use all the information and documents contained in tender specifications. We found that this reduces the risk of errors and the time spent to create tender specifications.

We have also found that some platforms re-use information from the contracting authority profile without offering the possibility to edit information in the tender specifications such as the name of the contracting authority and its address. To change this information, we had to edit the contracting authority profile and re-create the tender specifications.

DOs

- allow contracting authorities to create, store, search, re-use and edit templates that help them in creating tender specifications and notices
Related objective(s):
- use frequently asked questions and other supporting information to help contracting authorities in creating tender specifications and notices
Related objective(s):
- use automatic data validation in the online forms with clear guidance on how to correct any mistake
Related objective(s):
- store information about the contracting authority on the platform and allow the contracting authority to make use of it when creating calls for tenders and notices
Related objective(s):
- apply the "only once encoding" principle
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't prevent contracting authorities from editing information copied from a template or their profile
Related objective(s):
- don't ask the contracting authority to provide the same information more than once
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★

The method used to create calls for tenders is neutral to accessibility for SMEs.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

Re-using information from previous tender specifications, instead of manually re-encoding, increases legal certainty and confidence because it decreases the risk of error and the number of inconsistencies between similar tender specifications.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★

The method used to create tender specifications is neutral to cross-border bidding.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★

The method used to create tender specifications is neutral to transparency and accountability.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Using pre-filled forms avoids having to enter the same information for each new contract notice or tender specifications, which reduces the time needed to create a new contract notice or tender specifications.

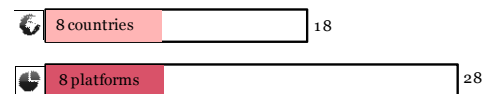
Support change management ★★★★★

Multi-page forms take the contracting authority step by step through the creation of an electronic contract notice or tender specifications, while providing examples or an explanation as to what information is needed in which field of the form.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 19

Contracting authorities can evaluate part of their tenders automatically based on pre-defined criteria

Practice 15: Economic operators can choose to manually or electronically sign a submission report containing the hash value of each submitted document

Practice ID **A4-19-03** Practice rating **4.33 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow economic operators to choose between signing a submission report manually or electronically. The submission report always contains the hash value of each submitted document and is signed electronically by the platform.

This way, it is possible to ensure integrity of content, non-repudiation and authenticity of origin of the submitted tenders. Giving economic operators the possibility to choose avoids the mandatory use of digital signatures. Additionally, instead of having to sign each document separately, the economic operator can sign them all in a single step.

Anecdote

What we have found is that most platforms require tender documents to be digitally signed. However, we have also found that obtaining the required digital certificate was very cumbersome. Additionally, most digital certificates could not be re-used in another platform.

We also found that some platforms allowed the manual signature of a submission report. This was done by printing a one page report containing the hash values of the tender documents, signing it manually and sending it either by fax or post. This simple procedure allowed us to submit tenders in foreign platforms without the need to purchase new digital certificates.

DOs

- give economic operators the option to sign manually or electronically
Related objective(s):
- implement a submission report containing the hash values of the submitted documents
Related objective(s):
- use standard cryptographic hash functions such as the Secure Hash Algorithm SHA-2
Related objective(s):
- electronically sign the submission reports sent to economic operators
Related objective(s):
- accept large attachments and clearly indicate the technical restrictions
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't require economic operators to use digital signatures
Related objective(s):
- don't require economic operators to sign every single document separately
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★★

Allowing SMEs to manually sign the submission report eliminates the burden of implementing a digital signature process.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

The submission report is sufficient to ensure integrity of content, non-repudiation and authenticity of origin of tenders.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★★

Allowing manual signatures avoids the barriers caused by the use of national digital certificates.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★★

The submission report is sufficient to ensure non-repudiation and therefore makes both economic operators and contracting authorities accountable.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Providing both options makes the submission process usable by more economic operators and efficient as it does not require each document to be signed separately.

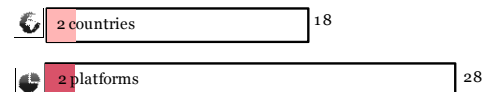
Support change management ★★★

It is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice **Practice 20**

Platforms use European e-Signature validation services to validate e-Signatures during e-Submission

Practice 16: Economic operators receive a proof of delivery upon successful submission of their tender

Practice ID **A4-21-01** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary





Platforms that apply this practice confirm receipt of tenders by providing a proof of delivery to economic operators. This document always contains the hash value of each received document and a timestamp.

This way, it is possible for economic operators to obtain a legally valid proof of receipt, which can increase their confidence.


Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms do not provide any proof of delivery upon submission of tenders. We have also found that in some cases it is possible to receive a proof of delivery but only if it is requested.

DOs

- provide the proof of delivery digitally signed by the platform
Related objective(s): 
- include basic information about the contracting authority, tendering process and economic operator on the proof of delivery
Related objective(s): 
- use standard cryptographic hash functions such as Secure Hash Algorithm SHA-2
Related objective(s): 
- state clearly that the tender was received in time
Related objective(s): 







DON'Ts

- don't implement custom cryptographic hash functions preventing economic operators from verifying the hash value
Related objective(s): 

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

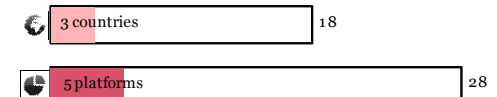
Objectives

-  **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★
It is neutral for SME accessibility.
-  **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★
It provides a legally valid proof of receipt.
-  **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★
Receiving a proof of delivery is neutral for cross-border bidding.
-  **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★
The proof of delivery makes the economic operator and contracting authority more accountable for their transaction. It also makes it transparent.
-  **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★
Receiving an automatic proof of delivery is the most efficient way to inform economic operators that their tenders have been successfully received.
-  **Support change management** ★★★
Receiving an automatic proof of delivery is neutral for change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 15

Economic operators can choose to manually or electronically sign a submission report containing the hash value of each submitted document

Practice 17: Economic operators can resubmit their tenders up until the submission deadline

Practice ID

A4-22-01

Practice rating

3.83 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow economic operators to resubmit electronic tenders up until their presentation deadline. In the opening process, only the last submitted tender is considered for evaluation. As long as no tender has been opened, the platform still accepts tenders. However, tenders submitted after the deadline are clearly marked as late and disqualified unless the contracting authority decides otherwise.





This way, it is possible for economic operators to easily correct errors or adjust their tenders further to new information being published by the contracting authority.

Anecdote


What we have found is that some platforms do not allow resubmission of tenders even if the presentation deadline has not yet passed, making any potential mistakes impossible to correct once a tender has been submitted.

We have also found that some platforms, while providing a warning that the submission deadline has expired, allow submission (but not re-submission) of tenders after the presentation deadline. The platforms also provide functionality for the contracting authority to qualify or disqualify late tenders.

DOs

- allow economic operators to save draft versions of their tenders on the platform
Related objective(s): 
- allow economic operators to resubmit their tenders up until submission deadline
Related objective(s): 
- consider not automatically rejecting tenders submitted after the submission deadline but before the opening session
Related objective(s): 
- receive tenders submitted after the deadline but mark them as late
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't allow partial submission of tenders (each submission should be complete)
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★


Allowing resubmission of electronic tenders makes it possible for SMEs to correct possible errors in their tenders before the submission deadline.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★


Resubmission of electronic tenders is neutral to legal certainty and confidence.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★

Allowing resubmission of electronic tenders is neutral for cross-border bidding.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★

The economic operator can choose to upload its tender once it is ready but can still change it if need be (for example further to clarification by the contracting authority). This improves the transparency of the process and keeps both economic operators and contracting authorities accountable.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

Economic operators are likely not to wait until the last day to upload their tender. This is more efficient because uploads will be more spread out over time and not all be done on the submission deadline. Regarding usability, it reduces economic operators' concerns at a failed upload. If something goes wrong before the submission deadline, a new upload is possible without needing to call the platform's support service.

 **Support change management** ★★★★

Resubmission of tenders reduces the "fear" of failed uploads and this makes economic operators more willing to use e-Procurement.

Legend

Undermines objective **Supports objective**

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 16

Economic operators receive a proof of delivery upon successful submission of their tender

Practice 18: Platforms keep tenders encrypted until the opening session

Practice ID

A4-22b-01

Practice rating

4.5 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice store tenders in encrypted form until the opening session. Tenders cannot be opened until the date set for the opening session. This mechanism is commonly known as a tenderbox. There are also organisational procedures in place to ensure appropriate access control to the private decryption key until the opening session.

This way, it is possible to ensure the full confidentiality of tenders until the opening time.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms did not store tenders encrypted after submission, even if they ensured confidentiality during transport through a protocol for secure network communications such as SSL.

We also found that some platforms enforced end-to-end encryption through an application that had to be installed locally, which increased the technical complexity of e-Procurement for economic operators.

DOs

- set a fixed deadline for opening tenders
Related objective(s): 🔍
- provide for a backup for each officer required to open tenders
Related objective(s): 🗄️
- set down formal organisational procedures and non-disclosure agreements to ensure segregation of duties and full confidentiality of tenders
Related objective(s): 🗄️
- use technologies like SSL/TLS to ensure confidentiality of tenders while in transit between the computer of the economic operator and the platform
Related objective(s): 🌐🔒
- implement data logging to maintain an audit trail of any access or attempted access to tenders stored on the platform
Related objective(s): 🗄️

DON'Ts

- don't forget that the use of technology does not replace good practices such as the 4-eyes principle during the opening session
Related objective(s): 🗄️
- don't share the private decryption key with non-authorized people
Related objective(s): 🗄️

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

🔒 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★

The use of encrypted storage in conjunction with digital transport encryption technologies (such as SSL/TLS) avoids requiring the installation of software by SMEs.

🔒 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★★

By means of cryptology, the platform ensures that nobody can access the received tenders until the time stated in the call for tenders. Confidentiality during transport should be ensured through a protocol for secure network communications such as SSL/TLS.

✈️ **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★

The use of encrypted storage in conjunction with digital transport encryption technologies (such as SSL/TLS) avoids requiring foreign economic operators to install software.

🔍 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★★

Tenders are saved in a tenderbox by the platform, which avoids any manual processes.

📄 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

There is no manual intervention in the process of storing received tenders. The encryption rules are set up by the contracting authority when defining the tendering process.

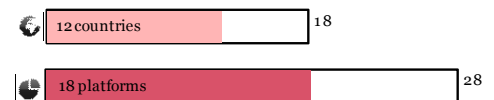
🔄 **Support change management** ★★★

The use of a encrypted storage is mostly neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 17

Economic operators can resubmit their tenders up until the submission deadline

Practice 19: Contracting authorities can evaluate part of their tenders automatically based on pre-defined criteria

Practice ID

A4-27-01

Practice rating

3.83 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice allow contracting authorities to define automatic evaluation criteria when creating calls for tenders.

This way, it is possible for the platform to automatically generate a ranking to suggest one or more winners.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms allow contracting authorities to define custom criteria to rank tenders automatically. It allowed us to include soft criteria such as scores awarded by expert reviewers. This made it possible to have a semi-automatic evaluation of tenders which included quality criteria.

We have also found that some platforms allow tenders submitted by post to be encoded in the system, so as to include them in the ranking generated by the platform.

DOs

- allow contracting authorities to manually input tenders submitted on paper to the platform
Related objective(s):
- present the results of the automatic evaluation in a clearly comprehensible, comparable, exportable way
Related objective(s):
- allow contracting authorities to override the results proposed automatically by the system and award the contract electronically to whomever they choose in accordance with the rules of the terms of reference
Related objective(s):
- allow contracting authorities to choose between automatic, manual or mixed evaluation of tenders
Related objective(s):
- clearly indicate the evaluation criteria together with the call for tenders
Related objective(s):
- log all the steps in the evaluation process to create an audit trail
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't make it a requirement that all competitions have to be evaluated automatically
Related objective(s):
- don't allow contracting authorities to modify submitted tenders
Related objective(s):
- don't allow contracting authorities to update the automatic evaluation criteria after a submission deadline
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★

Automatic evaluation is neutral for accessibility by SMEs.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

Automatic evaluation reduces the risk of human error.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★

Automatic evaluation is neutral for cross-border bidding.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★★

Automatic evaluation allows the platform to keep an audit trail of the evaluation process, which improves accountability. The platform can also automatically generate feedback to bidders, improving transparency.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

The time spent to evaluate the tenders is significantly reduced when evaluation is automated. The time spent to create the contract award notice and feedback to the bidders is also significantly reduced when evaluation is automated.

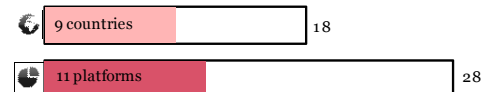
Support change management ★★★

Automatic evaluation is neutral for change management.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 14

Contracting authorities can re-use information contained in their profile or in previous notices to create contract notices, tender specifications and award notices

Practice 20: Platforms use European e-Signature validation services to validate e-Signatures during e-Submission

Practice ID **A4-34-01** Practice rating **4.33 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice verify digital signatures using European digital signature verification services, such as the DSS tool developed by DG MARKT.

This way, it is possible for platforms to accept a wide range of digital signatures to avoid exclusion of foreign economic operators.

Anecdote

What we have found is that the use of national digital certificates is by far the highest barrier for cross-border participation to public procurement. Despite having already five different digital certificates issued in different European countries, we were unable to re-use any of them to submit a tender in yet another country. Instead, we had to go through the entire administrative process again to obtain a new digital certificate in order to present our tender.

DOs

- make use of European e-Signature validation services
Related objective(s):
- clearly indicate which digital certificates are supported
Related objective(s):
- enable economic operators to use the same digital certificate on different platforms
Related objective(s):
- promote digital certificates which are supported by the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't reject digital certificates which are on the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers
Related objective(s):
- don't exclusively promote national certification authorities
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★

Having a European e-signature verification service is neutral to accessibility by SMEs.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★★

Using the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers ensures legal certainty for foreign-issued qualified digital certificates, increasing confidence in the overall system.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★★

Supporting a European e-signature verification service allows foreign economic operators to use their own digital certificates in cross-border tendering processes (as long as they are included on the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers).

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★★

Using the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers makes the process more transparent and accountable, as the process to select certificates complies with agreed EU criteria.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★★

Providing a European e-signature verification service is more efficient and usable as economic operators just need to obtain and install a single digital certificate (as long as it is from a provider on the EU Trusted Lists of Certification Service Providers).

Support change management ★★★

Providing a European e-signature verification service is neutral to change management.

Legend

Undermines objective ★ | **Supports objective** ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in

3 countries 18

3 platforms 28

- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice **Practice 15**

Economic operators can choose to manually or electronically sign a submission report containing the hash value of each submitted document

Practice 21: Platforms clearly indicate all costs related to use of the platform

Practice ID **A5-02-01** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice provide an overview of all the costs related to use of the platform in a freely accessible webpage or document.

This way, it is possible for economic operators and contracting authorities to identify upfront all the costs linked to using the platform.



Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms require the purchase of time-stamps to be able to submit a tender. These time-stamps could only be purchased in bundles of 100 and were valid for only one year, which caused economic operators to purchase superfluous time-stamps.




We have also found that some platforms charge extra for urgent registrations, to send notifications to economic operators or to allow economic operators to search opportunities. This kind of pricing strategy was often paired with a lack of transparency.

Finally, we have found that some platforms require the purchase of a digital signature to be able to submit tenders or access tender specifications. Moreover, a new digital signature had to be purchased for each additional user of the same organisation accessing the platform. Information on this additional cost was provided exclusively to registered users.

DOs

- give clear information about costs per transaction
Related objective(s): 
- minimise the registration costs for economic operators; free is preferable
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't add timestamps as a hidden extra charge for economic operators
Related objective(s): 
- don't add a hidden additional charge per additional user of the same organisation accessing the platform
Related objective(s): 
- don't require economic operators to provide attestations, certified translations or other documents that may entail costs for them when registering with the platform
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★


SMEs bid for smaller contracts and are price sensitive, and so the costs of using the platform can be significant and uncertainty about those costs may lead a SME to not use the platform.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★


Costs relative to use of the platform is neutral to legal certainty and confidence.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★


Foreign economic operators often face extra costs due to having to translate legal documents, and so lack of transparency on costs can act as a deterrent.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★

Since use of the platform is part of the procurement process, price transparency contributes to the transparency of the overall process.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★

Costs relative to use of the platform is neutral for usability and efficiency.

 **Support change management** ★★★★★

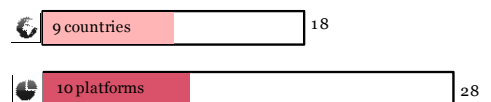
Transparent information on the cost of e-Procurement is necessary to properly plan the change from paper to electronic procurement.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective

★
★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Practice 22: Economic operators can create tenders using a core set of structured data and unstructured documents

Practice ID **A6-01-02** Practice rating **3.83 / 5**

Summary






Platforms that apply this practice structure key data of the tender. Depending on the nature of the tender, non-structured documents are also supported.

This way, it is possible to enable the automation of evaluation-related processes and reporting.





Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms support only document upload for the submission of tenders. This prevents the automatic evaluation of the tenders and the re-use of information for the creation contract of award notices or new tenders.

DOs

- use CEN BII data models to structure the data and CEN BII controlled vocabularies to facilitate the automation of evaluation-related processes and reporting
Related objective(s): 
- use online forms to capture the structured data
Related objective(s): 
- use frequently asked questions and other supporting information to help economic operators fill in the forms
Related objective(s): 
- use automatic data validation in the online forms with clear guidance on how to correct any mistakes
Related objective(s): 
- allow economic operators to save draft versions of their tenders on the platform
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't oblige economic operators to create their tenders only with unstructured documents
Related objective(s): 
- don't use proprietary standards to structure data
Related objective(s): 
- don't use proprietary controlled vocabularies to structure data
Related objective(s): 
- don't design online forms as an XML-scheme document
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★


Support of structured data and controlled vocabularies may guide SMEs in correctly completing tenders. Of course, everything depends on the user-friendliness of the forms.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★★


Use of structured data and controlled vocabularies for tender documents removes ambiguity and therefore increases legal certainty and confidence.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★


Use of structured data and controlled vocabularies is neutral for cross-border bidding.

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★★

Use of structured data and controlled vocabularies facilitates the creation of reports, which improves transparency.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

Use of structured data and controlled vocabularies facilitates the automation of evaluation processes.

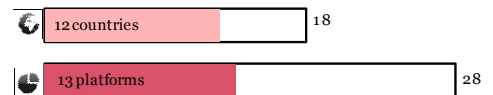
 **Support change management** ★★★

Use of structured data and controlled vocabularies does not significantly influence the move from paper to digital.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective
 |-----| 

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 19

Contracting authorities can evaluate part of their tenders automatically based on pre-defined criteria

Practice 23: Economic operators have the freedom to choose the platform of their preference without being locked in by the choice of the contracting authority

Practice ID **A6-02-04**

Practice rating **4.33 / 5**

Summary



Platforms that apply this practice can accept tenders submitted by economic operators registered on other platforms. This can be achieved by allowing the same platform to be used by economic operators as a front office (e.g. for downloading notices and submitting tenders) and by contracting authorities as a back office (e.g. for preparing contract notices and evaluating tenders). The interconnection between front-office and back-office platforms developed independently depends on interoperability agreements at technical, semantic and organisational level.

This way, it is possible for economic operators to choose the platform of their preference without being locked in by the choice of the contracting authority.


Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms required us to install a single software, which allowed us to submit tenders to different platforms. The protocol used between the local application and the platforms was standardised.

DOs

- promote separation between the front-office side of platforms for economic operators and the back-office side for contracting authorities
Related objective(s): 
- promote interoperability agreements among platforms that cover organisational, semantic and technical dimensions
Related objective(s): 


DON'Ts

- don't exclude economic operators registered on other platforms from submitting tenders
Related objective(s): 


This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding


Objectives

 **Enhance accessibility for SMEs** ★★★★★


SMEs would no longer be obliged to switch platforms depending on the contracting authority of the tender specifications.

 **Ensure legal certainty & confidence** ★★★


Assuming that interoperability agreements are put in place, the separation between front office and back office is neutral to legal certainty and confidence.

 **Facilitate cross-border tendering** ★★★★★


The separation between front office and back office could lead to cross-border interoperability among platforms developed independently in different Member States (in the mid to long term).

 **Promote transparency & accountability** ★★★

The separation between front office and back office is neutral to transparency and accountability as long as interoperability agreements are in place.

 **Improve usability & efficiency** ★★★★★

The separation between front office and back office would lead to a more efficient environment as economic operators would be able to freely choose which platforms to use according to their own preference, as already happens today with contracting authorities.

 **Support change management** ★★★★★

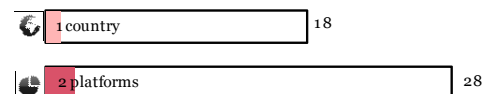
The transition to e-Procurement is likely to be smoother when economic operators are not required to change platform according to the choice made by the contracting authority.

Legend

Undermines objective Supports objective

★ |-----| ★★★★★

This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice Practice 24

Platforms use standard specifications to structure their data and to promote interoperability

Practice 24: Platforms use standard specifications to structure their data and to promote interoperability

Practice ID

A6-03-01

Practice rating

4.17 / 5

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice implement specifications such as those of CEN BII and PEPPOL.

This way, it is possible for platforms to benefit from increased interoperability by adopting the specifications of CEN/BII and the building blocks and specifications developed by the PEPPOL project. The recommendations of CEN's e-Procurement workshop help platforms to establish interoperability agreements at organisational and semantic levels. The specifications of PEPPOL are complementary and support interoperability at the technical level.

Anecdote

What we have found is that some platforms are publishing contract notices and tender specifications in XML using the specifications of PEPPOL. This enables the creation of interfaces between ERPs and the platforms.

We have also found that some platforms develop their own specification and use proprietary controlled vocabularies. This reduces the compatibility of those platforms with other systems.

DOs

- consider implementing the specifications developed by CEN/BII and the services from PEPPOL
Related objective(s):
- include a link to e-Certis so that economic operators are able to identify which documents and certificates they need to submit, and to help contracting authorities establish what documents they need to request
Related objective(s):

DON'Ts

- don't implement ad hoc, proprietary specifications which are not intended to promote interoperability across borders
Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- e-Notification
- e-Access
- e-Submission
- e-Evaluation
- e-Awarding

Objectives

Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★

The implementation of specifications which promote interoperability enables platforms to offer a core set of similar services, lowering the learning curve for SMEs.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★★

Legal certainty and confidence are easier to assert when the level of standardisation increases among platforms developed independently.

Facilitate cross-border tendering ★★★★

Specifications such as those of CEN/BII and PEPPOL are the foundation for a more interoperable environment where platforms can communicate with one another across borders.

Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★

Legal transparency and accountability are easier to assert when the level of standardisation increases among platforms developed independently.

Improve usability & efficiency ★★★★

Standardisation is linked to efficiency improvements, both when building the platform and when using it.

Support change management ★★★★★

Standardisation supports the mass move from paper-based procurement to e-Procurement.

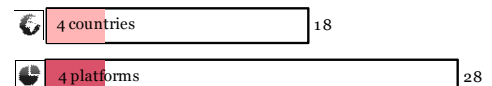
Legend

Undermines objective

Supports objective



This practice has been observed in



- Centralised public platform
- Non-centralised public platform
- Private platform

Related practice

Practice 23

Economic operators have the freedom to choose the platform of their preference without being locked in by the choice of the contracting authority

Contacts



Our sincere thanks go to all the e-Procurement platform owners and experts who shared their knowledge and thinking with us. Their active and candid participation is the single greatest factor in the success of this study. We greatly appreciate the participants' willingness to free up their valuable time to help make this study as comprehensive as possible, and we're delighted that their input is integrated into this report.

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