Deliverable

Golden Book of e-Procurement Good Practice

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This is an advanced draft of the e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this version of the document, it is still a draft. The practices shown in this document may still be changed or even deleted. Any errors or omissions should be communicated to the author.

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Key definitions used in this report

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

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 – 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.

e-Procurement Phase – The e-Procurement process is divided into two e-Procurement phases, divided by the award of the contract: Pre-Award phase and Post-Award phase.

Functionalities (*a.k.a. e-Procurement services*) – Generic term used to refer to processes, contractual tools and procedures provided by e-Procurement solutions.

Platform (*a.k.a. e-Procurement solution*) – Web-based system that provides services to contracting authorities and economic operators for electronic public procurement.

Procedures – Methods for executing a procurement process based on the EU directives. Possible procedures are: open procedure, restricted procedure, negotiated procedure or competitive dialogue.

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.

Objectives defined by eTEG

The e-Tendering Expert Group (eTEG), is an initiative by DG MARKT aimed at developing a blue-print for common e-tendering/e-submission solutions. For more information, please refer to [DG MARKT's website](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement/expert/index_en.htm)[1].

Enhance accessibility for SMEs – e-Procurement solutions need to be efficient and easy to use for both contracting authorities (CAs) and economic operators (EOs). These solutions should allow the participation of all stakeholders, particularly SMEs, in electronic public procurement procedures. These e-Procurement systems should be easily accessible and usable by public purchasers and suppliers (having particular regard to the needs of SMEs), with procurement opportunities visible and accessible to suppliers across the single market.

Ensure legal certainty & confidence – Ensuring legal certainty and confidence is essential in order to achieve wide spread acceptance and usage of electronic tendering processes among CAs and EOs. Recommendations on this range from need for national information campaigns – via describing e-Tendering solution characteristics – to pointing at the need to set standards for interoperability. Ensuring legal certainty is about removing ambiguity 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 member states (MS) using

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement/expert/index_en.htm

electronic solutions in their day-to-day operations and provide guidance and support to others based on their real life experience.

Facilitate cross-border bidding – Facilitating the cross-border for bidding platforms is very useful not only for EO, but for CAs as well. One of the key objectives of e-procurement systems is to not restrict the possibility of EOs to submit their offers for tenders launched in countries different from the one of residency.

Cross-border bidding will avoid the fragmentation of the market, will increase the market transparency and facilitate the competition. Transposed into benefits – we will have better quality of services and administrations for lower prices.

Promote transparency & accountability – Promoting transparency and accountability is required not only to allow better and equal access to public procurement but also to secure paper-free processes and allow analysis of past events. The following recommendations must be considered as an addition to recommendations concerning legal certainty and confidence, and to recommendations concerning authentication of all actors involved in the processes.

The final goal is that all parties would be well informed of market opportunities and that a good traceability of all actions would allow analysis in case of need.

Improve usability and efficiency – E-Tendering means increased efficiency for both the CAs and the EOs. For the CAs it means that it is easier to prepare the call for tenders where there is a platform that provides basic data and good functionality. It is also timesaving when opening the tenders. Opening and validation can be done in minutes instead of several hours. Automatic evaluation is another very timesaving functionality, which also means increased transparency. The contract award phase can also be more effective and electronic documents can be transferred to the post award process, which facilitates for the end users. An efficient process gives possibilities to focus on quality aspects and also better following-up with useful statistics. For the EOs easy access to call for tenders are valuable. Simplified registration and a user-friendly platform with good functionality means a cost effective process. Timesaving is important but also increases transparency. By easier and timesaving tendering process the EOs can participate in more procurements processes. Usage of standards, simplified registration and access for the users, possibilities to enable modification of tender dossier, to get support during tender completion etc leads to increased efficiency and makes it easier. Recommendations below shows both how improved usability and efficiency can be reached, and also what actions that could be taken in order to promote the usage and functionality of e-Tendering.

Support change management – Supporting change management is an important part when implementing e-Tendering. Paper based processes that might have been efficient for decades must be transferred to electronic based processes in order to make most out of e-Tendering. The transition to e-Tendering is also a very good chance for all MS to align process and requirements to establish real cross-border bidding. As an example in some MS electronic signatures are not necessary, while others depend on it. Therefore it will be up to the policy makers to support change and coordinate e-Procurement activities in Europe. To support change management will lead to interoperability not only on a technical level but also on processes, documents and the way of acting. In the end effective change management will increase transparency, reduce corruption and process cost on the side of CAs and EOs.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why an e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice?

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 recent Communication from the European Commission, *"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"*[2]. 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 in 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 (a.k.a. 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.

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. Such a gap is even more perturbing knowing 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% the same year.

What could now be the barriers preventing the uptake of e-Procurement in Europe? The European Commission has pointed out that the considerable **variation in e-Procurement platforms and service models** is a major obstacle to the 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.

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). The approval of these new Directives is expected by early 2013. These recent legislative proposals are, however, not alone 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 the 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**

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[2] COM(2012) – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social Committee of the Regions.

[3] COM(2010) - The *Green Paper on expanding the use of e-Procurement in the EU*, October 18, 2010

learnt from the 'field' so it can be relevant and overcome current barriers efficiently and effectively.

While the average level of e-Procurement usage is low, there are still valuable lessons to be learnt.

e-Procurement good practices are spread all over Europe, but are difficult to identify. There is a clear need to collect these good practices and to make them available in a single point of access, helping contracting authorities and economic operators to successfully implement e-Procurement. In this context, the European Commission has launched a study to benchmark current e-Procurement practices in Europe.

1.2 *Methodology used to identify the good practices of the e-Procurement Golden Book*

This study has been divided into three phases:

- First, more than 300 existing e-Procurement platforms have been identified on a pan-European level.

- From this long list of e-Procurement platforms, 30 platforms have been selected, tested and assessed against criteria such as interoperability, accessibility, ease of use and cost-effectiveness.

- Based on this assessment good practices have been extracted, classified and organised. This analysis has finally lead to the writing and publication of this document, representing the contents of the e-Procurement Golden Book of Good Practice.

The phases are illustrated in the figure below.
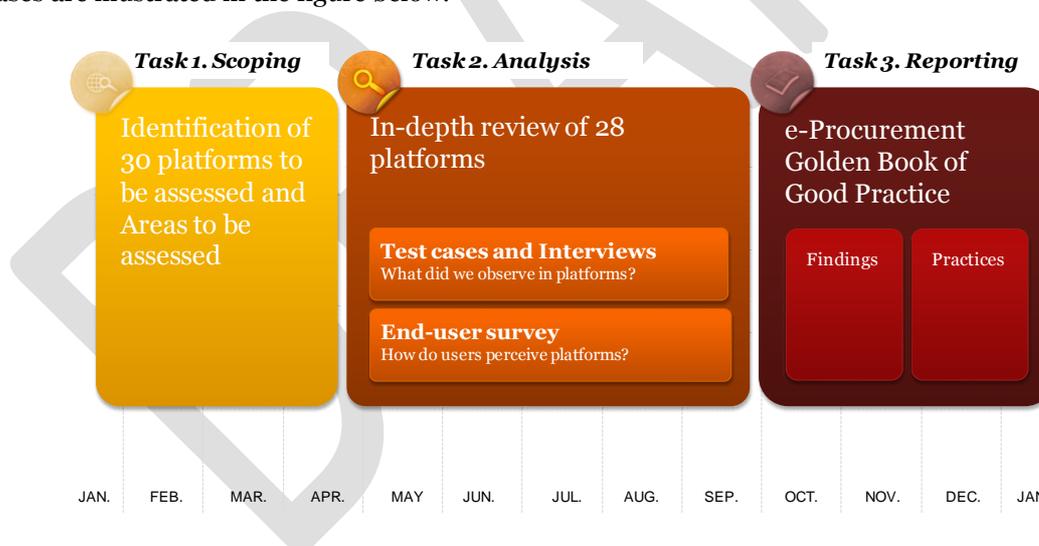
Figure 1 - Project phases

The outcome of this work will be used to promote convergence towards good practices by Member States and public authorities investing in e-Procurement solutions.

2 Catalogue

2.1 Explanation of the catalogue

This chapter presents an overview of the good practices that have been extracted, classified and organised into a catalogue of good practices based on the in-depth assessment of 28 e-Procurement platforms in 17 countries in Europe. Each practice presented in the catalogue is also further detailed and rated. It should be noted that the practices are based on observations and lessons learnt during testing of the selected 28 e-Procurement platforms and not on theory.

The following sections detail the catalogue of good practice and each of the individual practices.

To analyse each of the individual practices, objectives defined by eTEG have been used:

- Enhance accessibility for SMEs

- Ensure legal certainty & confidence

- Facilitate cross-border bidding

- Promote transparency & accountability

- Improve usability and efficiency

- Support change management

These objectives are defined in section 'Objectives defined by eTEG' above.

2.2 Catalogue of Good e-Procurement Practices

The following section presents the good practices.

Table 1 – Catalogue of e-Procurement Good Practices

Identifier	Practice title	Judgement criteria						Average rating
		Enhance accessibility for SMEs	Ensure legal certainty & confidence	Facilitate cross-border bidding	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	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	4,33333
Practice 2	Economic operators and contracting authorities benefit from affordable training plans	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	4,33333
Practice 3	Platforms have communication plans in place to promote the use of e-Procurement	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	4
Practice 4	Economic operators can access and retrieve contract notices and tender specifications as anonymous users	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	4,5
Practice 5	Economic operators can register on the platform without having to provide country-specific information	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4
Practice 6	Economic operators complete their registration on a platform by clicking an activation link sent by email	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 7	Platforms support English in addition to the official language(s) of the member state(s) where they operate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	4
Practice 8	Economic operators can use a username and a password to log in to a platform	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4,16667
Practice 9	Economic operators can search contract notices using a set of search criteria	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4,16667
Practice 10	Economic operators can evaluate whether tender specifications are relevant for them based on information available in contract notices	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 11	Economic operators are notified of any changes to tender specifications	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	4
Practice 12	Platforms support automatic transmission of all types of notices to TED	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	4
Practice 13	Economic operators and contracting authorities can search CPV categories based on their code or their description	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 14	Contracting authorities can re-use information contained in their profile or in previous notices to create contract notices, tender specifications	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	3,83333
Practice 15	Economic operators can choose to manually or electronically sign a submission report containing the hash value of each submitted document	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	4,33333
Practice 16	Economic operators receive a proof of delivery upon successful submission of their tender	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 17	Economic operators can resubmit their tenders up until the submission deadline	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	3,83333
Practice 18	Platforms keep tenders encrypted until the opening session	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4,5
Practice 19	Contracting authorities can evaluate part of their tenders automatically based on pre-defined criteria	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 20	Platforms use European e-Signature validation services to validate e-Signatures during e-Submission	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4,33333
Practice 21	Platforms clearly indicate all costs related to use of the platform	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	3,83333
Practice 22	Economic operators can create tenders using a core set of structured data and unstructured documents	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	3,83333
Practice 23	Economic operators have the freedom to choose the platform of their preference without being locked in by the choice of the contracting author	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	4,33333
Practice 24	Platforms use standard specifications to structure their data and to promote interoperability	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	4

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	4.33 / 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

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**   ★★★★

Mandatory e-Notification increases economic operator confidence in e-Procurement.

✈ **Facilitate cross-border bidding**   ★★★★★

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**   ★★★★

Mandatory e-Notification on a central platform gives better and equal access to public procurement.

💻 **Improve usability and efficiency**   ★★★★

An 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

8 countries	17
10 platforms	28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A4-11-03

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

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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4.33 / 5

Objectives

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

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

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

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

✈ **Facilitate cross-border bidding** ★★★★

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 do not affect the transparency of public procurement.

💻 **Improve usability and 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

🌐 11 countries	17
🥧 14 platforms	28
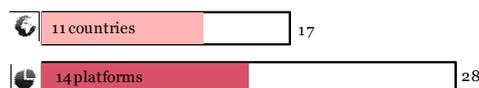
- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A2-02-02

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 ID	A2-02-03

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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4 / 5

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 bidding ★★★★

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 and efficiency ★★★

Communication surrounding the platform does not increase usability.

⚡ 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

🌍	17 countries	17
🥧	25 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID	A2-02-02

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

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, when using a platform, we had to install a Java application in order to be able to access tender specifications.

👍 DOs

- offer light registration (email 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	4,5 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★★

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 and 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	17

9 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID	A4-01-01

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

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 registeration 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):

Practice rating	4 / 5

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 bidding ★★★★★

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

Improve usability and 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

9 countries — 17

11 platforms — 28
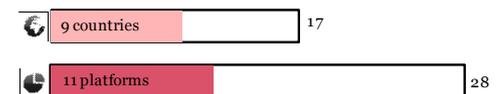
☑ Centralised public platform

☑ Non-centralised public platform

☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A3-07-02

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

☑ e-Ordering

☑ e-Invoicing

☑ e-Payment

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

Practice ID	A3-07-02

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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding**   ★★★

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 and 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

🌍	12 countries	17
📊	13 platforms	28
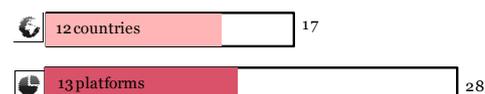
- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A3-02-01

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

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 contry 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

👍 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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4 / 5

Objectives

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

SMEs are able to understand the platform and participate.

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

Understanding the user interface increases confidence.

✈ **Facilitate cross-border bidding**　★★★★★

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 and 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

🌐 | 16 countries | 17

🥧 | 20 platforms | 28

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

Related practice	ID	Insert ID
0		

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

Practice ID	A3-12-01

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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4,17 / 5

Objectives

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

The use of a username and password is widely implemented in similar contexts.

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

The use of a username and password is widely implemented in similar contexts.

✈ **Facilitate cross-border bidding** ★★★★★

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 does not affect the transparency and accountability of the platform.

💻 **Improve usability and 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 does not affect change management.

Legend

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

This practice has been observed in

🌍	16 countries	17
🥧	19 platforms	28
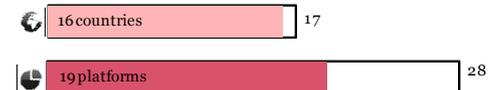
- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A3-02-01

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*

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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

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 bidding ★★★★★

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 and 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

| 🌍 | 8 countries | 17 |
| 📊 | 9 platforms | 28 |
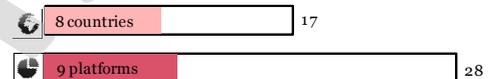
- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice   ID   A4-04-02

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

Practice 10.   Economic operators can evaluate whether tender specifications are relevant for them based on information available in contract notices

Practice ID	A4-04-02

Summary

Platforms that apply this practice clearly indicate:

- whether the tenders can be submitted electronically
- where the tender documents can be found
- the name of the contracting authority
- the subject-matter of the contract
- the type of contract (goods, services or works)
- the publication date
- the submission deadline without needing to calculate it
- the place of delivery
- the contract value

This way, it is possible for economic operators to easily obtain all the information they need to evaluate whether the opportunity is of interest to them.

Anecdote

What we have found is that, with the exception of countries with legal requirements on e-Submission, the decision on whether to use paper based or electronic submission is left to the contracting authority. We also found that most of the contract notices published in the platforms have to be responded to by paper based submission.

When performing a search among contract notices we found that some platforms clearly state, using an icon, which of the contract notices represent calls for tenders that can be answered electronically and which cannot. We, however, also encountered a platform that used icons, without a legend, which could not be understood.

We have also found that some platforms do not present requirements in the contract notices at all. We had to go through the detailed requirements to understand whether the tenders should be submitted electronically or not. We also found that in most cases the search results were displayed in a list with all or some of the information detailed in this practice. Additionally, we encountered some platforms that presented the results of the search in a manner resembling an internet search engine, also displaying information about name of categories of the contract notices and number of opportunities matching the criteria.

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):

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 concerns

- ☑ e-Notification
- ☑ e-Access
- ☑ e-Submission
- ☐ e-Evaluation
- ☐ e-Awarding
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

Objectives

🏠 Enhance accessibility for SMEs ★★★★

Clear and complete contract notices facilitate the identification of relevant calls for tenders, which eases access for SMEs to public procurement.

⚒ Ensure legal certainty & confidence ★★★

The format of contract notices is neutral to legal certainty or confidence.

✈ Facilitate cross-border bidding ★★★★

Clear and complete contract notices facilitate the identification of relevant calls for tenders for foreign economic operators.

🔍 Promote transparency & accountability ★★★★

Clear and complete contract notices increase transparency and allows better access to public procurement.

💻 Improve usability and efficiency ★★★★★

Clear and complete contract notices increase usability because economic operators do not have to gain access and examine contract documents to obtain all the information they need to evaluate whether the opportunity is of interest to them.

Support change management ★★★

The format of contract notices is neutral to change management.

This practice has been observed in

🌐 3 countries — 17

🞈 3 platforms — 28

- ☐ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Legend

Undermines objective   Supports objective

★—————————————————————————————★★★★★

Related practice	ID	A4-01-01

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

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

Practice ID	A4-09-01

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): 💻

- aggregate 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	4 / 5

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 bidding**　★★★★

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 and 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	17

🥧 18 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID	A4-21-01

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

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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	4 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★★

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 and 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

17 countries	17

20 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID A2-01-02

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

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 timeconsuming 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★

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 and 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	17
10 platforms	28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	**ID** **A4-01-01**

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

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding**   ★★★

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 and 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

🌐 | 8 countries | 17

🖥 | 8 platforms | 28

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

Related practice	ID	A4-27-01

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

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	4.33 / 5

Objectives

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

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

⚖ **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 bidding** ★★★★★

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 and 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

🌐	2 countries	17

◔	2 platforms	28

- ☐ Centralised public platform
- ☑ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A4-34-01

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

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 type of confirmation or 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):

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★

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 and 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 concerns

- ☐ e-Notification
- ☐ e-Access
- ☑ e-Submission
- ☐ e-Evaluation
- ☐ e-Awarding
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

This practice has been observed in

🌐	3 countries	17
🥧	5 platforms	28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice   ID   A4-19-03

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

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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding**   ★★★

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 and 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

🌍	17 countries	17
🥧	21 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID	A4-21-01

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

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

To be completed

👍 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 confidentially 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-authorised people
  Related objective(s):

This practice concerns

- ☐ e-Notification
- ☐ e-Access
- ☑ e-Submission
- ☐ e-Evaluation
- ☐ e-Awarding
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	4,5 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★

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 and 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

🌐	12 countries	17
📊	20 platforms	28

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

Related practice   ID   Insert ID

0

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

Practice ID	A4-27-01

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

To be completed

👍 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 automatic evaluation results and award the contract electronically to whomever they choose
  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
- ☐ e-Ordering
- ☐ e-Invoicing
- ☐ e-Payment

Practice rating	3,83 / 5

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 bidding**　★★★

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 and 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

9 countries	17

11 platforms	28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A4-15-01

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

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

To be completed

👍 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
- 🔲 e-Ordering
- 🔲 e-Invoicing
- 🔲 e-Payment

Practice rating	4.33 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★★

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

🔍 **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 and 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 | 17

📊 | 3 platforms | 28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- 🔲 Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A4-19-03

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☑️ e-Ordering
- ☑️ e-Invoicing
- ☑️ e-Payment

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

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

Costs relative to use of the platform do not impact legal certainty or confidence.

✈️ **Facilitate cross-border bidding** ★★★★

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 and efficiency** ★★★

Costs relative to use of the platform do not impact usability or 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

🌍 9 countries	17

🥧 10 platforms	28

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

Related practice | ID | Insert ID

0

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

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 bidding**   ★★★

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 and 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

🌐	12 countries	17

📊	13 platforms	28

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

Related practice	ID	A4-27-01

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

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4.33 / 5

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 bidding ★★★★★

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

💻 Improve usability and 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

🌐	1 country	17

🕑	2 platforms	28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice   ID   A6-03-01

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

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

To be completed

👍 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
- ☑ e-Ordering
- ☑ e-Invoicing
- ☑ e-Payment

Practice rating	4 / 5

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 bidding** ★★★★

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 and 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

🌍 | 4 countries | 17
🌐 | 4 platforms | 28

- ☑ Centralised public platform
- ☐ Non-centralised public platform
- ☑ Private platform

Related practice	ID	A6-02-04

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