

Procure

A shared regional platform makes public e-procurement more competitive and attractive for small and medium-sized enterprises.



The PROCURE project starts from the premise that it is better for public authorities within a region to share an e-procurement platform and create a one-stop shop for public contract bidding.

Local authorities want to get the best for taxpayers' money. Many have already deployed online marketplaces where they can more easily publish calls for tenders and manage the public procurement process. These platforms reduce the administrative burden and cost of procurement procedures and increase the competition for contracts. They deliver citizens with better value for money.

- Businesses don't have to monitor multiple sites and submit responses in different formats.
- Higher response rates to tenders.
- Potential for joint tenders between several authorities.
- Wider participation among SMEs
- Greater competition for contracts means more innovative bids and less costly contracts.
- Costs of platform maintenance and development are shared among authorities.

Funded by the eTEN programme, PROCURE has developed regional e-procurement platforms in five pilot regions. The regions of Uddevalla (Sweden), Brittany (France) and Piedmont (Italy) all had existing regional platforms, and have focused communication strategies to improve their usage. Regional platforms were deployed from scratch in the regions of Central Bohemia (Czech Republic) and Guadeloupe (France).

Promoting a platform

In Uddevalla, Brittany and Piedmont the project explored ways to promote the platform among both local authorities and businesses, especially SMEs.

All three regions worked in partnership with local chambers of commerce and branches of professional association to deliver seminars and demonstrations of the platform to local SMEs. The project has provided training for staff involved in public procurement so they get the best out of their regional e-procurement platform.

More than 1500 members of staff were trained in Uddevalla. The training package has been developed and applied in other pilot regions of the project.

During the project, in Brittany:

- Growth in number of registered businesses: 130%
- Growth in downloads of documents: 410%
- Growth in e-tenders for low value contracts (below EU thresholds): 230%
- Growth in e-tenders for high value contracts (above EU thresholds): 550%



Following the experimentation, elected representatives of the Central Bohemia have recently decided to keep the Procure solution running and to start constructing their regional platform of e-services.

Deploying the platform

The project also deployment a fully functional regional e-procurement platforms in Central Bohemia and Guadeloupe, supported by training and outreach programmes. Significant adaptations were required to translate the platform into the Czech language and ensure that it complied with local procurement legislation. Both regions reported positive uptake of the solution and are intending to maintain them beyond the duration of the project.

Cross-border tendering

PROCURE also developed a way for companies to read and submit bids for tenders on other regional platforms. A module can be plugged into a regional platform so that public buyers can publish their calls for tenders on a European portal site. Companies are able to see these calls, which may be above or below the European threshold, and submit tenders via the local regional sites.

Whilst the technical functionality of the module and the portal have proven successful, the lack of harmonisation across Europe in legislation regarding eSignatures and procurement processes still make the practicalities of cross-border e-tendering difficult. The PEPPOL project is currently working on addressing some of these issues.

Solutions

PROCURE and its technical partners Atexo and Sopra Group have developed technical solutions and support packages for the deployment of a regional e-procurement platform.

- Advice/strategy on deployment and implementation
- Communication and promotion strategies
- SME outreach
- Staff training for e-procurement
- Adapting and translating an open source e-procurement platform to its local context
- Cross-border e-tendering.



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