Chapter 6

EKAP: Turkey’s Centralized E-Procurement System

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the author, who has served as one of the lead administrators and designers of Turkey’s e-procurement platform (EKAP) discusses the development of the system since May 2009. Specific focus and discussion will be on three main choices on how to develop the system. Will it be mandatory or voluntary? Is it better to create a platform centrally or delegate responsibility to individual public/private parties? How will applications in the platform be introduced, step by step or all at once? The author argues that as a centralized and mandatory e-procurement platform and developed step by step, EKAP successfully transformed public procurement procedures in Turkey, thanks to right choices made regard to the development of the system.

INTRODUCTION

The term “e-procurement” has probably been the trendiest word in the public procurement profession in recent years. Since the beginning of this millennium, along with development of several e-procurement systems such as KONEPS of the Republic of Korea, e-procurement was increasingly quoted as a panacea to well-known ills of public procurement procedures including corruption, fraud, collision, lack

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of transparency and public oversight. However, what is understood from this term is not unique. Kohli (2012) defines e-procurement as “conducting on the internet the equivalent of the manual tendering process, with the ostensible objective of enhancing transparency and efficiency of public procurement”. European Commission (2010) defines it as ‘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.’ Gardenal (2010) defines it as “a specific set of instruments, technologies and organizational solutions supporting public procurement processes, particularly considering the possibility to manage tendering procedures and auctions online (e-tendering, e-auctioning)”. For the purpose of this chapter the term public e-procurement will be used to define “partial or complete conduct of public procurement procedures on an internet based platform specifically established for public procurement purposes”.

Along with many other countries trying to establish a public e-procurement system, Turkey also looked for an e-procurement system to achieve the objectives written in the fifth article of the public procurement law no 4734 (PPL). These objectives are transparency, equal treatment, trust, confidentiality and timely and appropriate meeting of public needs. The institutional framework for e-procurement in Turkey includes, the Turkish Public Procurement Authority (PPA), an independent regulatory and supervisory public organization charged with oversight of public procurement in Turkey, contracting entities, suppliers and other government institutions in charge of various e-government applications to supplement the e-procurement system with information used in public procurement procedures such as tax identification numbers for suppliers who are legal persons and addresses of suppliers. PPA was established in 2002 after the enactment of the PPL same year. PPL was officially entered into force by the beginning of 2003 as one of the main reform laws enacted after the devastating economic crises of 2001 along with assistance from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the European Commission.

PPA’s work on e-procurement dates back to 2004 when a working group was established to review best practices around the world in order to create an ideal e-procurement model for Turkey. This working group, whose one of the members was the author of this chapter, built a reference e-procurement model after these reviews and consultations with other stakeholders including contracting authorities and unions of suppliers. This model featured an establishment of a single centralized electronic public procurement platform that has to be used (in other words mandatory) by related parties including both contracting authorities and suppliers, established and improved step-by-step (PPA, 2007). In this chapter, the primary focus will be the decisions of PPA and perhaps the Turkish government on whether to establish a single centralized platform or multiple decentralized platforms, make its use mandatory or voluntary and open the platform with end-to-end features
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