Chapter 3

Electronic Government Systems for E-Procurement Procedure in the EU

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ABSTRACT

Public Electronic Procurement provides a new means of communication between contracting authorities and economic operators, as well as being one of the most important areas in the development in the business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce like buyers and suppliers entities respectively. European Union (EU) has been working hard for the adoption of e-Procurement in the governments of member states; overall action plans for the development of e-government occurred during the new millennium. However, this transition, from the traditional model of procurement management procedure to electronic means is very complicated; the impact of any new technology brings much change and the required regulatory policies, both within the EU and in Member States. This study presents the e-procurement from the e-government regulatory contexts in EU. Then, it outlines the basic pillars of both the public e-procurement process and the management systems, and finally, introduces large-scale pilot projects by the European Commission (EC) that provide technology solutions for many of the stages of the procurement process.

1. THE PUBLIC E-PROCUREMENT ON THE E-GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

The Information Society is part of the policies of the European Union that promotes open and competitive society with a focus on e-Government. The development of these policies was marked for the period 2000-2010 through the Lisbon Strategy (EC, 2000) and the Action Plans: e-Europe 2002 (EC, 2002), e-Europe 2005 (EC, 2005) and the i2010 Strategy (EC, 2010). However, the global economic crisis has significantly affected the results, very different than expected. This is the reason that has prompted a redesign of the political strategy of the European Union and which results in Europe 2020 (EC, 2011), a strategy for smart growth, sustainable and inclusive.
Europe 2020 makes again a commitment to the development of the Information Society as a cornerstone of an inclusive, intelligent and sustainable. This has led to the inclusion among the seven key initiatives in Europe 2020, “A Digital Agenda for Europe”, adopted by the Commission during the Spanish Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2010 (EC, 2010, August 26). The purpose of the Digital Agenda is to achieve the sustainable economic and social benefits to be derived from a digital single market based on ultrafast Internet and interoperable applications.

The implementation of e-Procurement should be based on a gradual enrolled in the plan of development of e-Government in the field of public administration. Such is the importance of e-Procurement that the European Digital Agenda foresees the adoption of a White Paper which will outline the measures the Commission intends to take to establish an infrastructure of networked electronic public procurement.

An acceptable definition of the public electronic procurement, may be found in the Green Paper on expanding the use of e-Procurement in the EU (2010, October 18), referring to the term as: “use of electronic communications and transaction processing by government institutions and other public sector organizations when buying supplies and services or tendering public works”. It is not simply a conversion of a system on paper to electronic form. Electronic Procurement, as mentioned in the various European Digital Agendas and Action Plans, can contribute substantial improvements in contracting goods and services, public management and operation of public procurement internal markets in the field of national contracts.

The development of e-Government in the European Union particularly arises from a consensus reached by Member States in the Ministerial Declarations occurred since 2001 in Brussels, and especially from Manchester (Ministers ofEU, 2005), with the creation of the i2010 e-Government Action Plan (EC, 2006). This action plan focused on five major objectives for e-Government with specific objectives, three of which related directly to e-Procurement:

1. Deploying high-impact e-Government services like e-Procurement can save billions of Euros for European public administrations, which means more taxpayers money available for essential services. Member States committed themselves to the goal that, by i2010 Action Plan, 100% of public procurement will be available electronically and 50% of actual use of procurement procedures above the legal European Union thresholds (from 50.000 Euros for simple services and 6 million for public works).

2. Turning efficiency and effectiveness in fact, contributing significantly to greater satisfaction, greater transparency and responsibility, reduced administrative burden and increased efficiency.

3. Developing essential tools, enabling citizens and businesses benefit from an authenticated access, comfortable, secure and interoperable public services across Europe.

The Action Plan i2010 highlights the importance to expedite the establishment of the electronic administration in Europe, in order to answer to a series of challenges and requirements:

1. Modernizing and doing more effective public services.

2. Offering services of higher quality and more insurance to the population.

3. Responding to demand from companies who desire minus bureaucracy and more efficiency.

4. Ensuring the continued cross-border services.

All of these Ministerial Declarations agree on the idea of promoting e-Government and identify it as a key tool, available to citizens and entities