



The e-marketplace for small value procurement in Italy: The MePA



Public Procurement Principle: **Access, E-procurement**



Procurement Stage: **Pre-tendering, Tendering**



Audience: **Procuring entity, Policy maker, Private sector**

Description

Launched in 2004 and currently operating with an e-catalogue of over 10 million items, the MePA (Electronic Marketplace for the Public Administration) is one of the leading e-marketplaces currently operating in Europe. Managed by Consip, MePA provides a paperless environment for awarding low-value public contracts for goods, services and maintenance works.

It is a digital marketplace in which contracting authorities (CAs) can purchase goods and services offered by qualified enterprises for a value below the EU threshold. MePA in fact encourages economic operators (EOs) to engage with CAs throughout Italy.

The e-marketplace provides operational flexibility, allowing for direct awarding from standardised e-catalogues and for requests for quotations (RfQ). CAs can choose among a wide range of goods and services offered by an increasing number of EOs.

MePA is open to any kind of enterprise that meets the qualification criteria. How does it work? CAs can access the MePA e-catalogue, a user-friendly shop window showcasing the goods and services available; easily compare the prices, features and delivery conditions offered by different Eos; and then proceed with the purchase according to the chosen procedure – direct order or RfQ. The process is split into three steps:

Step 1 – Consip publishes the MePA tenders.

Step 2 – EOs qualify and publish their e-catalogues and offers compliant with the tender indications.

Step 3 – CAs issue direct orders or negotiate prices and supply conditions during RfQ.

MePA's major benefits for CA:

- Time saving
- Transparency and traceability of the entire procurement process
- Greater range of products to buy with the possibility of comparing prices and characteristics offered by EOs from all over the country
- Opportunity to satisfy customised needs by means of RfQ that identify specific requirements
- MePA's major benefits for EOs:
 - Decreasing commercial costs and optimising sales times
 - Wider access to the public procurement market and opportunity to propose offers throughout the entire national territory
 - Potential enhancement of the company, despite the small size of the enterprise
 - Competitiveness and direct comparison with the reference market
 - Incentive for the renewal of sales processes

The MePA: A growing instrument in an expanding market At the end of 2017, for the first time, the transactions carried out on the MePA – about 600 000 – reached a value of EUR 3.1 billion. That figure that can increase significantly, given the potential market for public spending and the exponential growth of the MePA. Only five years ago, at the end of 2012, the value of annual purchases was one-tenth what it is today, EUR 360 million a year. The average growth recorded during the past few years was more than 50% per year.

Today, the MePA is progressively becoming larger, indeed “universal”. In August 2017, Consip began reorganisation of the offer on the MePA, simplifying its structure and at the same time extending the product categories available to users.

The existing product/services tenders moved from 41 to only 9: 1 for goods, 1 for services and 7 for the various categories of maintenance works. This reorganisation makes it much easier to foresee new categories of purchase and to enlarge the number of products and services available, encompassing the entire potential universe of purchases below the threshold. A great deal can be purchased through the MePA If the amounts for individual purchases on the MePA are less relevant than the big tenders, that should not lead to the conclusion that this is a market of little importance.

In fact, throughout the public administration, low-value supply purchases represent, in terms of number, the majority of the total amount of purchases – over 99% of the approximately 4.5 million contracts performed annually – and in terms of value they represent around 20% of the total value of tenders published every year (amounting to over EUR 100 billion). Moreover, in the maintenance work market, which is worth about EUR 5 billion each year, half of the expenditure concerns procedures under the value of EUR 1 million (thus potentially via MePA).

OECD (2018), SMEs in Public Procurement: Practices and Strategies for Shared Benefits, OECD Public <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307476-en>

