

Country case: Supplier Training Desks (STDs) in Italy

Description

Italy has strengthened its co-operation with suppliers by setting up Supplier Training Desks (STDs) (“Sportelli in Rete” in Italian) within the offices of suppliers’ associations. STDs provide training and assistance to local enterprises and in particular micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) on the use of electronic procurement tools. The project consists of a network of dedicated training desks over the country where the central purchasing agency, Consip experts train workforce from the associations that will subsequently train local MSMEs on the use of electronic procurement tools. In Italy, MSMEs (Micro Enterprises) tend to participate to lower value public procurement tenders. Their participation to tenders from 100,000 to 300,000 euros corresponds to 65%, whereas to tenders from 1 to 5 million euros their participation decreases up to 51% and to 30% for tenders with a value higher than 5 million euros.

Public Procurement
Principle: **Access, Balance**

Procurement Stage:

All phases

Audience: **Policy Maker,
Procuring Entity, Private
Sector**

The project addresses point 5 of the European Small Business Act (SBA): “Adapt public policy tools to SME needs: facilitate SMEs’ participation in public procurement and better use State Aid possibilities for SMEs”, it has also been quoted as a good practice, at a European level, in the “European Code of Best practices facilitating access by SME’s to public procurement contracts” and has been winner of the European eGovernment Awards in the category “empowering business”.

This project has been well received and attended by MSMEs. Since the beginning of the project, more than 2,250 MSMEs were supported by the Supplier Training Desks, and obtained the qualification to the public emarketplace implemented by Consip for low value purchases through ecatalogues (MePA). Around 1000 of these enterprises were qualified in 2013, which corresponds to 44% of the total. 11 National Enterprises Associations are involved in the project.

Their role is fundamental since they are recognized, by the enterprises, as the local reference institution. As a result, in 2013, more than 21,000 SMEs represented 98% of on line enterprises (online at least once between 1st of January and 31st of December) and 14,000 SMEs represented 98% of active enterprises (active means having been awarded at least once between 1st of January and 31st of December).

Furthermore, in 2013 97% of the number of transactions (337,682) was handled by SMEs and 93% of the value (EUR 907 million) was gained by SMEs.

Table 1: Online and active enterprises in 2013

Size of enterprise	Online	Active
Medium	5%	6%
Micro	68%	66%
Big	2%	2%
Small	25%	26%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2: Volume and value of transactions in 2013

Size of enterprise	Volume of transactions	Value of transactions
Medium	12%	16%
Micro	54%	42%
Big	3%	7%
Small	31%	35%
Total	100%	100%

Today, more than 200 training desks are active and scattered around the country, providing continuous free training and assistance. The MePA has allowed thousands of SMEs to make business during the last five years making it a very suitable procurement tool for SMEs who are the highest percentage of enterprises using it.

Consip's active role in setting up an efficient e-procurement platform and commitment in establishing a very collaborative partnership with the Enterprises Associations has changed the perception of Consip: it is no longer seen as a threat, but as a business opportunity in a transparent and competitive environment.

Source: OECD (2014), ["Compendium of Good Practices for Integrity in Public Procurement: Meeting of the Leading Practitioners in Procurement"](#), OECD, Paris.