



The European Catalogue

What benefits for procurers and businesses in Europe?

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Dynamising the procurement market of digital solutions

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

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The Communication on the Digital Single Market identified the need to integrate national catalogues to support the single market. The Communication from April 2016 on the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 announced the will of the European Commission to coordinate with Member States the development of the European Catalogue of ICT standards for public procurement by end 2017. The European Catalogue will act as a key enabler of the Digital Single Market, allowing greater benefit from the digital economy. It will not be limited to eGovernment services.

What is the current situation? Why must it change?

Smart procurement decisions reduce costs for public services and improve the interoperability of digital services, enabling an easier flow of data. The fast-evolving pace of ICT makes these choices more pressing and complex than ever, and requires skilled resources from procurers.

There is a need for a greater reuse across Member States and a better understanding of the benefits of standards. All too often Member States are locked in to specific vendors and the digital solutions acquired by public administrations are not interoperable due to the lack of consideration for standards during the procurement process, leading to expensive data exchange solutions.

The European Catalogue will be composed of use cases or scenarios, standards, profiles and guidelines on procurement in digital areas, including benefits and risks to acquire digital solutions,

existing costs assessment guidelines or reference projects, to refer to in the call of tenders in a way that fosters interoperability and prevents vendor lock-in. Additionally it might refer to existing European projects or studies.

Example 1: Greater collaboration across public services in digital areas

A procurer wants to implement a digital service. He has to assess current technologies including their maturity and implementation consequences, possible vendors, legal issues, costs, and many others. The risks in drafting a tender are numerous and there is no single reliable source of information at EU level.

Example 1: To implement a smart city strategy, a city would like to procure small cells. But is the technology mature or should it wait for a few years? What choices should be accounted in the procurement decision and process? Analysing this requires experts stranding from legal to technical areas and which the city might not have or afford. Also, the acquired small cells might not be easily interoperable with other systems with which they need to exchange data.

With the European Catalogue, the procurer will be able to find use case relevant to his, with the profiles or guideline on what standards to use that maximise interoperability and reduce lock. Where possible, he will get access to information on the implementation in other Member States.

What evidence is there?

42% of procurers feel that they are locked in to a specific service provider mainly because of mediocre interoperability and an insufficient use of standards, resulting in higher costs.

26% of tender notices in the digital area receive only one offer, indicating a pressing need to open the market, especially to SMEs.

Competition law is not fully applied as shown by the 12.5% of public ICT tenders which contain references to specific trademarks.

What are the benefits for smaller companies (SMEs)?

When it comes to the acquisition of digital solutions, Member States often have specific and different rules for the procurement process and the use of standards. These are not always easily accessible, creating a barrier to SMEs willing to enter new markets.

The European Catalogue will foster more coherence among the digital solutions procured across Member States, alleviating market entry barriers and enabling easier expansion of businesses across Europe.

Example 2: Allowing SMEs to enter procurement and learn the national rules in digital areas more easily

An SME selling digital solutions wants to expand its activities from France to Germany and the company will have to deal with other rules for cloud computing in public services. The costs of obtaining legal advice, adapting its solutions, finding out how the procurement market works in Germany, or adjusting business models in order to enter this new market, may be prohibitive.

For example: Needs in cloud services are different in UK than in Germany. A UK cloud provider wishing to expand abroad would have to understand a totally different world of procurement requirements.

With the European Catalogue, in the long run, the Member States should acquire more interoperable solutions, reducing the costs for SMEs to adapt their digital solutions. In addition, SMEs will be provided with intelligence on what are the procurement needs from the public services in cloud computing across Europe, allowing for greater clarity when it comes to expanding their business across Europe.