

BOOSTING THE ADOPTION OF THE ESPD UNDER A “ONCE ONLY PRINCIPLE” IN THE EU

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EUPLAT is the European Association of Public e-Tendering Platform Providers. EUPLAT is set up to discuss and represent common interests of commercial e-tendering platforms serving EU public contracting authorities and economic operators. It is an International Not-for-Profit Association organized under the Belgian law.

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BOOSTING THE ADOPTION OF THE ESPD UNDER A “ONCE ONLY PRINCIPLE” IN THE EU

Public procurement impacts millions of economic operators every year. Companies competing for the public tenders must provide several documents in several stages of the procurement procedures. The documents, whether credentials, attestations, evidence or declarations, must be provided every time a company – an Economic Operator (EO) – decides to apply for a tender. The situation becomes even more challenging in the cross-border context where the documents required are not necessarily the same for similar requirements.

The current scenario for an economic operator has been improving recently, namely with:

- i.** e-Certis, mapping the certificates issued as evidence in public procurement procedures across the EU, where the data is verified and updated by national ministries in charge;
- ii.** ESPD (European Single Procurement Document), used as a self-declaration and preliminary evidence in public procurement procedures allowing the eligibility of the economic operator to be part of a tender procedure meaning the originals will be requested only from the winner.

There are still two major areas of improvement:

- a)** The automatic gathering of the evidence produced by the ministries in charge in each country. Giving the nature of the challenge here, it should be expected to have public entities acting as authorized aggregators in each country;
- b)** The possibility to submit attestation documents one single time (Once Only Principle) so that they could be used in any other public procurement procedures for a period of time. To address this concern, the EU funded the project TOOP (launched in January 2017) that “will ensure that information is supplied to public administrations only once regardless of the company’s country of origin. This step eliminates unnecessary burdens for European businesses which are asked to present the same data and documents repeatedly.”

All these innovations will decrease burden and stimulate the involvement of more companies competing for public procurement, namely Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

To streamline the access to these innovations and ensure they are accessed in a proper and user-friendly way, the Public e-Procurement platforms – namely those covering the e-Tendering stage – are of major importance to ensure effective implementation and a wider adoption at an international level.

The Public e-Tendering Platforms have been implemented intensively in the last few years across the EU and globally, soon reaching total coverage in the EU, where due the new EU public procurement directives, all the national contracting authorities will have to use a Public e-Tendering platform by October 2018. This will mean these platforms are the primary interface for an EO and Contracting Authority (CA) to interact with respect to public procurement.

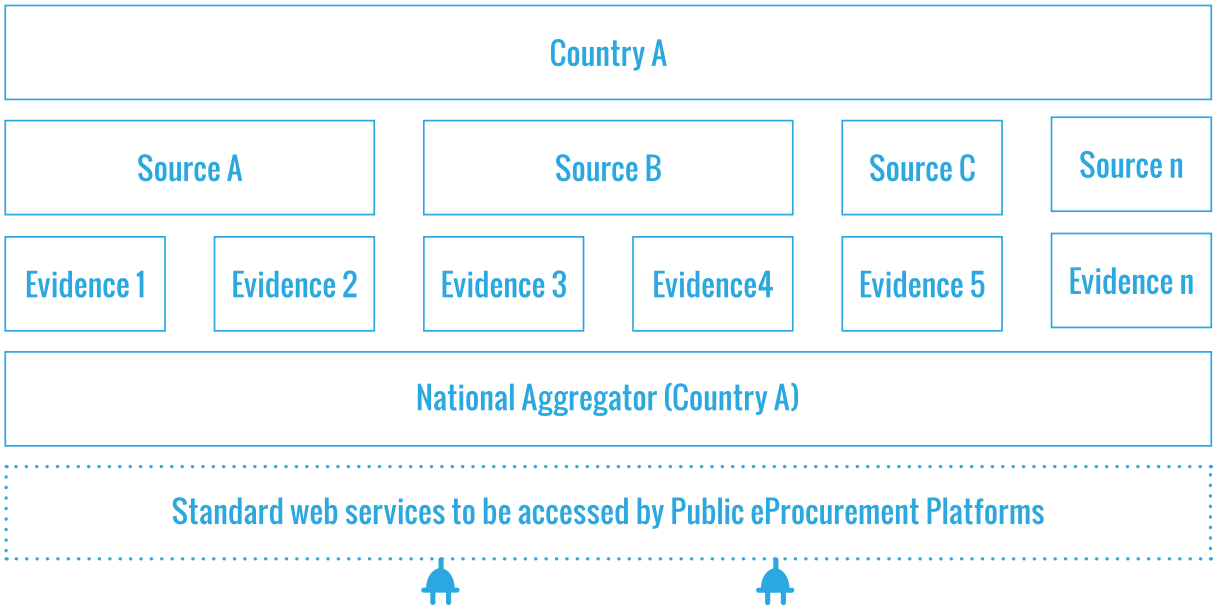
Public e-tendering Platforms are in an extremely well-placed to boost the adoption of the Once Only Principle, integrating the ESPD, the e-Certis and, eventually, integrating the data collected by the national aggregators from the several sources whenever possible.

Ultimately, the interoperability between the Public e-Tendering Platforms assures that an EO registered in one platform in one EU member state, will be able to access and provide access to their Virtual Company Dossier (VCD), from the e-tendering platform they are registered in, to any other Public e-Tendering Platform in the same interoperable framework.

THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL AGGREGATORS

Evidence is made available by public sector entities. In most cases, the EO is required to disclose that evidence, and this is typically valid for a period of time. In most such cases, there is a possibility of having the evidence in a digital format. In some cases, there are not yet digital records, thus requiring the physical creation of a paper document. It is the responsibility of the EO to collect and provide the evidence required for a public procurement procedure.

The role of the national aggregator is to act as a trusted entity able to gather the evidence required from the EO and to make documents available for each EO requiring the evidence to be made available in the e-tendering platforms they are used to working with.

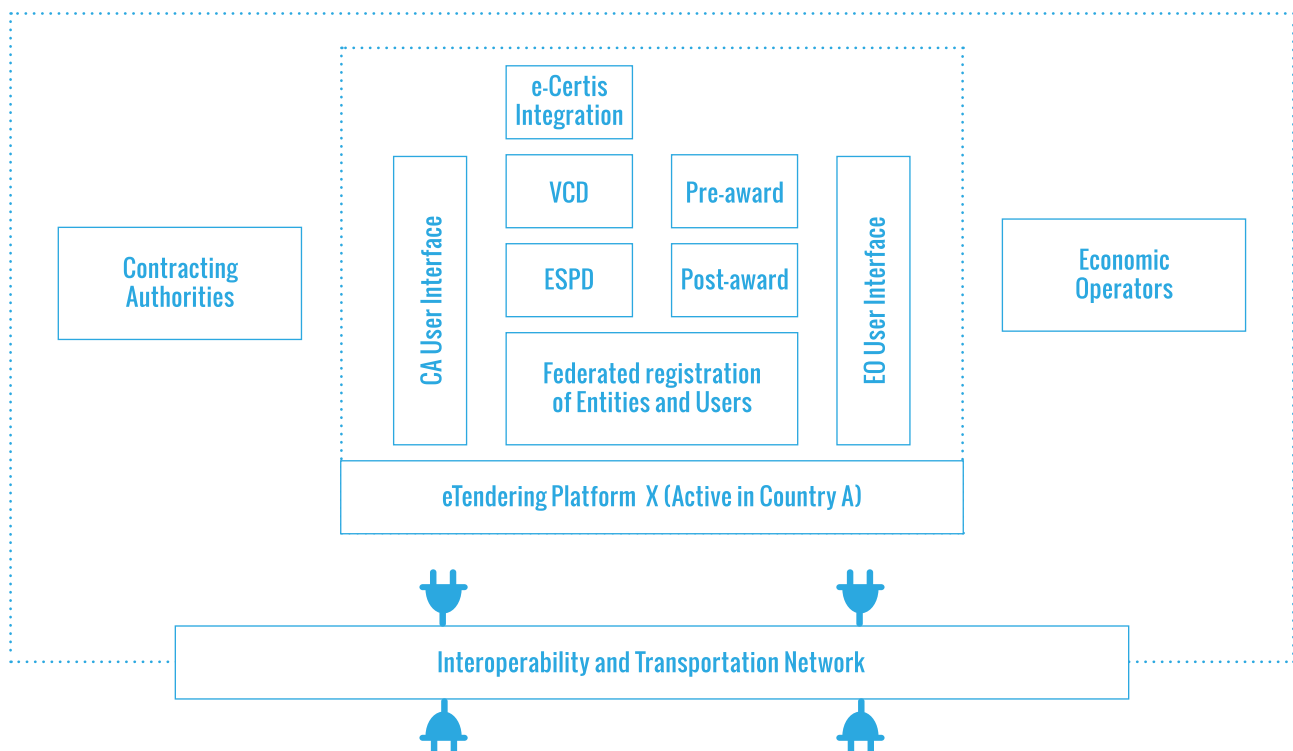


THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC E-TENDERING PLATFORMS

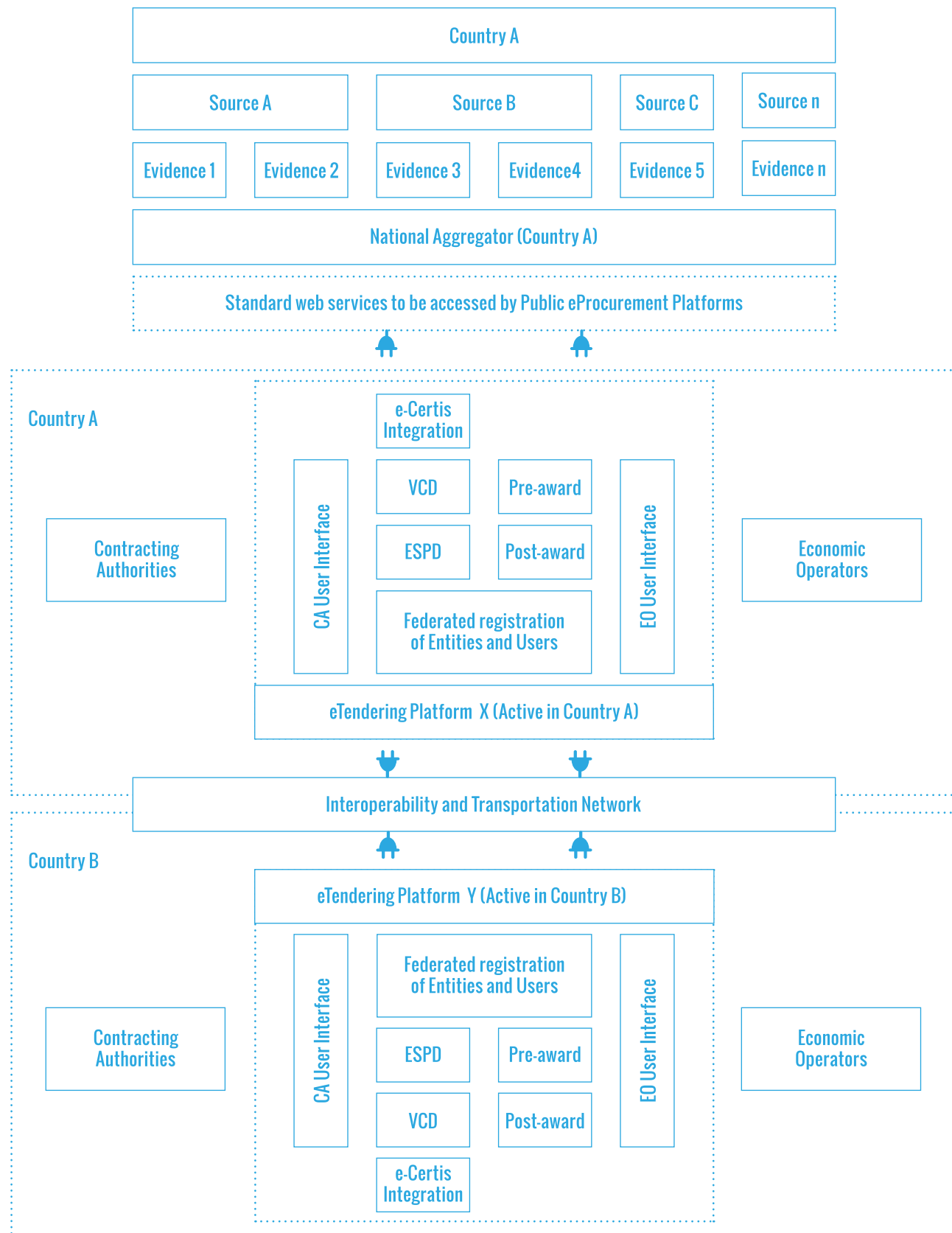
The Public e-Tendering Platforms are the ones used by the CA to create the tender procedures, namely the ESPD. As an interoperable document, the ESPD is in a very good position to become the first document to be exchanged in an interoperable context, between procurement platforms in the pre-award. That said, for the benefit of the EO, the ESPD should be automatically complied with according to the standard response template of each EO allowing updates and new answers as requested. An ESPD mapped with e-Certis is an extraordinarily useful tool for an EO to be guided on the evidence required if successful in that tender procedure. This is where an integration with a national aggregator able to provide all, or most, of the evidence, would reduce dramatically the risk of administrative mistakes and the time required to manage all the evidence to ensure they are valid and available.

With a certified and secure link to the national aggregator, a public e-tendering platform is the essential link for an EO and CA to access all the pre-qualification and attestation documents. The combination of the attestation documents, standard answers to the ESPD and evidence, would generate the VCD of each EO.

Given the obvious value delivered to both CA and EO, this should be the most enticing factor to generate an integrated adoption of the ESPD, e-Certis and VCD, driving an immediate implementation of the interoperability in the pre-award.



A CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE TO BOOST THE ESPD ADOPTION





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