European Multi-Stakeholder Forum on e-Invoicing (EMSFEI): key issues and next steps for the Activity Group on public procurement

Following the first meeting of the new Activity Group on public procurement during the EMSFEI meeting on 20 March 2014, this note captures the main conclusions and sets some expectations for our next steps.

We committed ourselves to producing an interim position paper setting out some initial recommendations by the next EMSFEI meeting in October 2014 with a view to developing these themes further over the following months. Our agreed focus relates to 'Implementation' in all its aspects. We are building on the previous work during the latter phases of the previous cycle of the EMSFEI, where the focus had been on business case, infrastructure and standards. We are now in a more granular phase relating to 'getting it done'.

Issues to be addressed

During our brain-storming session we made a list of issues and potential work areas as follows:

1. Clarifying the distinction between Pre-Award vs Post-Award processes and why we believe that the efficiency benefits of e-invoicing can be best achieved by taking a modular approach. We should recognize the role of two different functions focused on procurement and finance/accounting, which both need to work together and run distinct processes.
2. Setting up a clear picture of the end-to-end value chain.
3. How to meet the challenge of on-boarding multiple suppliers giving consideration to technology, incentives, support and the messages to be delivered.
4. Figuring out to create the right channels for accessing the multiple public authorities and contracting organisations
5. The need to ensure the public sector does not become a separate non-interoperable silo for the conduct of e-invoicing, bearing in mind channels should be re-usable for B2B invoices.
6. Assessing the role and impact of EU initiatives such as CEF, and PEPPOL
7. Infrastructure choices at all levels., including the use of Shared Service Centres
8. How the new Directive on e-invoicing in public procurement will/should impact the environment,including the Standard and the mandatory support for it on the part of contracting authorities.
9. How payment terms, prompt payment codes and supplier payment programs can deliver benefit
10. The need for back-office re-engineering including work flow and ERP modernization
11. The impact of politics and relationships on implementation
12. The role of service providers and enablers, including banks and accountants/bookkeepers
13. How framework agreements for services and solutions could support implementation
14. The role of 'fiscally motivated' government e-invoicing schemes.

Terms of reference

1. To liaise closely with the parallel EFEP and with other relevant stakeholders- process to be identified
2. To review and document a range of implementation issues arising from the decision to promote the widespread adoption of e-invoicing in all public bodies throughout Member States of the European Union and to make recommendations in the form of position/advisory papers.
3. To monitor developments and to gather case studies on successful examples of implementation with reference to business case development, project organization, and user support, with a particular focus on SMEs.

Next steps

1. Please comment on or expand/make suggestions regarding the ideas above
2. Each Activity Group member to prepare a two-pager setting out some thoughts such as experiences in your environment, key implementation challenges as you see them and/or any other observations or insights.
3. Please forward to Activity Leader by mid-April.
4. Please consider how the issues list can be converted into meaningful work items and which you are willing to engage with.
5. Also give some thought as to a name for this group:' Implementation challenges'?

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With thanks to Olav