Italy

Strategic framework, action plan and scope for procurement for innovation policy

At the time of the OECD Survey, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) was about to pass the National Research Plan (NRP) 2015-20. This plan aims at streamlining, simplifying and boosting the national research system by sustaining all research phases with new funds and by offering a stable and innovative policy framework. The NRP fosters policies that sustain research through the promotion of public demand for innovative solutions, and makes pre-commercial procurement an integral part of Italian national research policy.

There is no stand-alone procurement for innovation action plan. At the moment, the most complete normative and organisational framework is defined by the guidelines issued by the Dipartimento per la digitalizzazione della pubblica amministrazione e l’innovazione tecnologica and the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) in 2012. Following these guidelines, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and the Agency for Digital Italy (AGID) recently defined a pre-commercial procurement programme for the procurement of research, development and innovation services by public bodies. Even though this programme is of considerable scope, it cannot be considered a comprehensive national procurement strategy.

The pre-commercial procurement programme promoted by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with AGID has a total value of EUR 100 million. The calls for proposals include topics such as new solutions and cloud services for the automation of administrative procedures and document management; multi-parametric monitoring systems and the correlation of multimodal events for the preventive alerting of natural disasters and rapid organisation of emergency interventions. All actions currently undertaken or designed by MIUR refer exclusively to pre-commercial procurement, as defined by the European Commission.

Implementation

The MIUR-AGID agreement is a recent successful experience aimed at promoting research and development based on the demand for innovation expressed by the Public Administration (PA). Besides this pre-commercial procurement programme, there are valuable local valuable experiments, for example in Lombardy and in Puglia regions: In 2012, Lombardy Region and MIUR, with the support of The European House - Ambrosetti, launched a technical dialogue with the market, followed by a pre-commercial procurement initiative in the health sector. The Puglia region issued a call in the “independent living” sector, aimed at finding innovative solutions to improve the quality of independent life for people who are not self-sufficient.
Challenges, risks and solutions to overcome obstacles

The first challenge has to do with the normative framework of public tendering. At the start, the efforts on public procurement have been focused on rationalising it by the centralisation of all purchases in Consip S.p.A.. More recently, since 2012, “judicially validated” guidelines and templates were defined and allow (IPP) calls by Italian administrations.

Secondly, geographic fragmentation is a challenge. Local administrators prefer to engage in research and innovation policies with their resident constituency, while IPP calls need to be open on a wider scale. As IPP policy build on traditional local innovation policies, there is a geographical bias. Besides, the fragmentation of resources across many local actors may weaken the scale effects of innovative procurement.

Third, industrial stakeholders’ preference for demand-driven innovation policies is a challenge.

These obstacles have been partially overcome by defining national guidelines in line with the legal framework.

Key lessons learned

Italy submitted two lessons learned. First, innovative policy making benefits from an experimental innovation policy approach, and has to integrate monitoring and impact procedures. Secondly, co-ordination and joint strategic planning is strongly required in order to avoid geographic biases and resource dispersion.

Measurement and impact assessment

There is no system in place to measure the impact of actions related to procurement for innovation in Italy. All actions regarding IPP impact evaluation are referred to the NRP 2015-20. For the planning and implementation of the policies and tools provided by the NRP, within the General Directorate for Research, a unit will be established that is tasked with monitoring. This unit is also tasked with providing access to evidence processed by the different parts of the research system and reprocess them in order to conduct evidence-based modelling. Moreover, this action will develop procedures and tools for ongoing monitoring and analysis of information sources that will allow reproducing technological foresight analysis and documents, acting in synergy with ex-ante and ex-post assessments of research policies.