



ALPPS
Alpine Public Procurement Services

Your **key** to public contracts in the **Alpine space**

Opening the public sector to SMEs in the Alpine space

Coping with the difficulties encountered by SMEs when tendering abroad

Results of the SWOT analysis conducted by the ALPPS partners



An Interreg III B project

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ALPPS is a project partly financed under Interreg IIIB Initiative, Alpine Space programme.

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Countries participating in the **Alpine Space programme** include Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia for the European Union, as well as Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

ALPPS has been developed under **priority 1**, which objective is the promotion of the Alpine Space as a competitive and attractive living and economic space.

ALPPS counts 7 partners from 4 different countries of the Alpine area (France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland). Two non-official partners, located in Austria and Slovenia, have contributed to the success of the project within their countries (a short presentation of the partners is annexed to the present document).

Further details on the Alpine space programme can be found at
<http://www.alpinespace.org/>

For further information on structural funds:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en-.htm

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Abstract

Although public procurement accounts for more than 16% of the European Union's GDP, cross-border contracts are still rare. This is particularly obvious when we look at the tenders below EU thresholds. There, we find that the heterogeneity of the legal frameworks and the non-mandatory publication of calls for tender create substantial problems for interested companies. However, these are often precisely the tenders that are of interest to SMEs, which usually have neither the human nor the technical resources to adapt their strategy to comply with the legislation of every country.

The objective of the ALPPS project was therefore to implement solutions **to improve SME's access to public contracts within the Alpine Space**. To that effect, the main activities consisted in electronically disseminating tenders to a panel of pilot SMEs, developing an electronic guide summarising all the useful legal information about public procurement in the Alpine Space, organizing workshops in all participating regions, and finally conducting a SWOT analysis of the public procurement situation in the Alpine Space, subject of the present document. Indeed, the pilot phase was an opportunity, for the partners, to identify the many problems SMEs encounter when tendering abroad.

In total, more than **12 000 tenders were sent to 90 participating pilot companies** during the pilot phase. The number of relevant tenders received, and therefore the overall satisfaction with the project, varied considerably from one company to another, but also from region to region. Overall impressions seemed positive however, since 75 % claimed they would be willing to take part in a project like ALPPS again.

Within the framework of the ALPPS project, some pilot companies seized the **opportunity to submit bids beyond their national borders**, and four of them were even awarded public contracts, contributing to the success of the project.

The seminars and workshops organised by the partners were successful: more than 1600 participants attended these seminars, and felt satisfied (even very satisfied) with the quality of presentations.

The **practical guide**, available in electronic version and in different languages, covers both general issues related to public procurement in Europe and the specific situation in the different partners' regions. It can be downloaded from <http://www.alpps-online.com>

The **helpdesk activities** mainly focused on national/regional legislation and administrative or technical barriers. The level of activity as a helpdesk was linked to the number of tenders sent out from that region.

An important facet of the project also consisted in **promoting partnerships** through various approaches: personal contacts, meetings and specific software tools.

The project itself was promoted intensely at European, national and regional/local levels, and included a presentation at the Annual EIC Conference in Bucharest in October 2004.

To conclude, it should be mentioned that improved access to tenders below EU thresholds and more extensive information is crucial for SMEs. Awarding authorities should contribute to this effort, increasing procedures transparency and opening tenders to foreign companies.

However, information itself does not suffice in helping SMEs overcome the many difficulties they face when bidding abroad. **Strong local support** is also required from networks such as the EIC network.



Résumé

Bien que les marchés publics représentent plus de 16 % du PNB de l'Union européenne, les contrats transfrontaliers sont peu fréquents. Cette situation est encore plus flagrante, lorsqu'on analyse les appels d'offres inférieurs aux seuils communautaires. Il apparaît alors que l'hétérogénéité des réglementations et la diversité des pratiques en matière de publicité des appels d'offres, créent de réels problèmes aux entreprises concernées. Or, ce sont précisément ces appels d'offres qui intéressent les PME, et elles n'ont pas toujours les moyens humains ou techniques nécessaires pour adapter leur stratégie à la réglementation de chaque pays.

Le projet ALPPS avait pour objectif de mettre en place **des solutions permettant de faciliter l'accès des PME aux marchés publics dans l'arc alpin**. Pour ce faire, plusieurs activités ont été menées en parallèle: envoi de sélections d'appels d'offres par voie électronique à un échantillon de 90 entreprises pilotes, élaboration d'un guide électronique qui synthétise l'information réglementaire propre aux marchés publics dans l'arc alpin, organisation de séminaires dans toutes les régions participantes, et rédaction d'une analyse finale sur la situation des marchés publics dans l'espace alpin. En effet, la phase pilote fut l'occasion, pour les partenaires, d'identifier les différents problèmes auxquels sont confrontées les PME qui soumissionnent à l'étranger.

Au total, plus de **12 000 avis de marchés ont été ainsi envoyés aux 90 entreprises pilotes**, pendant la durée du projet. Le nombre d'appels d'offres pertinents reçus, et donc le taux de satisfaction des entreprises, a considérablement varié en fonction des PME, mais aussi selon les régions concernées. L'appréciation globale du projet reste bonne, puisque 75 % des entreprises pilotes seraient prêtes à participer à nouveau à un projet similaire.

Certaines entreprises ont su saisir l'occasion apportée par le projet Alpps, pour **soumissionner au delà de leurs frontières**. Les candidatures de quatre d'entre elles ont ainsi été retenues, contribuant au succès du projet.

Les **séminaires et réunions** organisés par les partenaires ont été un réel succès: plus de 1600 participants ont assisté à ces réunions, et se sont déclarés satisfaits (voire très satisfaits) de la qualité des échanges.

Le **guide pratique**, rédigé par les partenaires, traite à la fois de la situation générale des marchés publics en Europe, et des situations particulières dans chacune des régions participantes. Ce guide peut être téléchargé sur <http://www.alpps-online.com> en version anglaise, française, italienne ou allemande.

Les questions que les partenaires ont traité en tant que « **guichet** » **marchés publics** pendant la durée du projet ont essentiellement porté sur des problématiques liées aux réglementations nationales ou régionales existantes et sur les barrières techniques auxquelles les entreprises sont confrontées.

Les partenaires se sont également attachés à **favoriser les partenariats entre entreprises** par le biais de mises en contact direct, organisation de rencontres et utilisation de bases de données spécifiques.

Le projet a fait l'objet d'une promotion intensive aux niveaux européen, national et régional. Il a notamment été présenté au réseau Euro Info Centre à l'occasion de la conférence annuelle qui s'est tenue à Bucarest en octobre 2004.

Pour conclure, rappelons que les PME ont impérativement besoin d'accéder facilement aux appels d'offres inférieurs aux seuils communautaires et à l'information réglementaire correspondante. Les acheteurs publics doivent participer à cet effort, en améliorant la transparence de leurs procédures et en ouvrant leurs marchés aux entreprises transfrontalières.

Cependant, l'accès à l'information en soi n'est pas suffisant pour surmonter les difficultés que les entreprises rencontrent lorsqu'elles soumissionnent à l'étranger. Une assistance technique de la part de réseaux tels que le réseau Euro Info Centre s'avère également indispensable.



Riassunto

Oltre il 16% del PIL dell'UE è rappresentato dal settore degli appalti pubblici, tuttavia la partecipazione alle gare d'appalto transfrontaliere da parte di soggetti non nazionali resta molto bassa. Ciò è ancor più evidente quando si fa riferimento agli appalti sotto soglia UE. Sebbene quest'ultimi siano di maggiore attrazione per le PMI, l'eterogeneità del quadro giuridico ed il mancato obbligo di pubblicazione rappresentano uno dei principali ostacoli alla loro partecipazione. Le PMI interessate solitamente non possiedono le risorse umane o tecniche per adattare le proprie strategie ad ogni singola legislazione nazionale.

L'obiettivo del progetto ALPPS è stato proprio quello di ovviare a quest'inconveniente, fornendo soluzioni in grado di **facilitare la partecipazione delle PMI agli appalti pubblici all'interno dello spazio alpino**. Per il raggiungimento di tale scopo sono state realizzate le seguenti attività: diffusione elettronica delle gare d'appalto ad un gruppo di imprese pilota; realizzazione di una guida elettronica contenente utili informazioni di carattere legale sulle varie normative nazionali sugli appalti nello spazio alpino; organizzazione di workshop e seminari in tutte le regioni coinvolte e, infine, analisi SWOT della situazione degli appalti pubblici nello spazio alpino (oggetto del presente documento).

La fase pilota è stata inoltre un utile strumento per i partner del progetto per identificare le maggiori problematiche che le imprese devono affrontare per partecipare ad appalti oltre i propri confini.

In totale, nella fase pilota del progetto, **sono state trasmesse a 90 imprese più di 12 000 informazioni su gare d'appalto**. Il numero di avvisi di gara ricevuti e di conseguenza il grado di soddisfazione generale del progetto variano sensibilmente tra le differenti imprese, ma anche tra le differenti regioni. La valutazione globale sul progetto sembra però essere positiva poiché il 75% delle aziende pilota hanno dichiarato di essere interessate a partecipare nuovamente ad un progetto simile.

Nell'ambito di ALPPS alcune imprese pilota hanno colto **l'opportunità di partecipare ad un appalto al di fuori dei propri confini nazionali** e quattro di esse si sono aggiudicate delle gare, contribuendo così al successo del progetto.

Hanno inoltre riscontrato un ottimo successo i **workshop** ed i **seminari** realizzati: più di 1.600 partecipanti vi hanno preso parte ed hanno dichiarato di essere rimasti soddisfatti (anche molto soddisfatti) della qualità delle esposizioni effettuate.

La **guida pratica**, disponibile in versione elettronica in diverse lingue su Internet, tratta sia in generale della normativa comunitaria sugli appalti pubblici, sia nello specifico delle diverse situazioni nelle regioni coinvolte nel progetto. Tale strumento può essere scaricato direttamente dal sito: <http://www.alpps-online.com>

L'**attività di helpdesk** si è concentrata soprattutto nell'approfondire la legislazione nazionale o regionale sugli appalti pubblici e gli ostacoli tecnici ed amministrativi. Esiste una relazione tra l'attività di helpdesk effettivamente svolta ed il numero di gare d'appalto spedite dalle differenti regioni.

La **promozione di partnership** è stata poi una parte importante del progetto ed è stata realizzata con differenti modalità: contatti diretti, riunioni e specifici strumenti informatici.

Il progetto è stato promosso attivamente a livello europeo, nazionale e regionale, ed è stato presentato alla Conferenza Annuale degli EIC, svoltasi a Bucarest nell'ottobre 2004.

In conclusione, si può affermare che il miglioramento delle condizioni d'accesso agli appalti sotto soglia UE ed un'informazione più puntuale in merito sono elementi essenziali per le PMI. Gli enti appaltanti devono partecipare a tale sforzo, accrescendo la trasparenza e il grado di apertura delle gare d'appalto alle imprese transfrontaliere.

Tuttavia per aiutare un'impresa che voglia partecipare ad una gara d'appalto all'estero occorre non limitarsi a fornirle informazioni sulla materia, ma garantirle un forte supporto a livello locale, che può essere fornito da reti come quella degli Euro Info Centre.



Zusammenfassung

Obwohl das öffentliche Auftragswesen mehr als 16% des europäischen BIP ausmacht, sind grenzüberschreitenden Verträge immer noch selten. Dies wird besonders deutlich, wenn man die Ausschreibungen unterhalb der EU-Schwellenwerte betrachtet. Hier kann man feststellen, dass die unterschiedlichen rechtlichen Rahmen und die Tatsache, dass die Ausschreibungen nicht der Veröffentlichungspflicht unterliegen, zusätzliche Probleme für interessierte Firmen schaffen. Es sind jedoch oftmals genau diese Ausschreibungen, die für KMU interessant sind, welche ja für gewöhnlich weder die Personalressourcen noch die technischen Ressourcen haben, um ihre Strategie an die Gesetzgebung jedes einzelnen Landes anzupassen.

Ziel des ALPPS-Projekts war es daher, Lösungen umzusetzen, um den **Zugang von KMU zu öffentlichen Aufträgen im Alpenraum zu verbessern**. Um dies zu erreichen, bestanden die Hauptaktivitäten in der elektronischen Verbreitung von Ausschreibungen an eine Gruppe von Pilot-KMU, in der Erstellung eines elektronischen Leitfadens, welcher eine Übersicht über die praktischen rechtlichen Informationen zum öffentlichen Auftragswesen im Alpenraum gibt, in der Organisation von Workshops in allen teilnehmenden Regionen und schließlich in der Durchführung einer SWOT-Analyse der Situation des öffentlichen Auftragswesens im Alpenraum, die Gegenstand des vorliegenden Dokuments ist. Die Pilotphase war für die Projektpartner eine Gelegenheit, die vielfältigen Probleme zu identifizieren, auf die die KMU stossen, wenn Sie an Ausschreibungen im Ausland teilnehmen.

Insgesamt wurden während der Pilotphase **mehr als 12 000 Ausschreibungen an 90 teilnehmende Pilot-Unternehmen verschickt**. Die Anzahl der erhaltenen relevanten Ausschreibungen und somit die Gesamtzufriedenheit mit dem Projekt unterschied sich von einem Unternehmen zum anderen, aber auch von Region zu Region, ganz beträchtlich. Der Gesamteindruck erwies sich gleichwohl als positiv, da 75% der Unternehmen erklärten, dass sie bereit wären, wieder an einem Projekt wie ALPPS teilzunehmen.

Im Rahmen des ALPPS-Projekts nutzten **einige Pilot-Unternehmen die Gelegenheit, ein Angebot über ihre nationalen Grenzen hinweg abzugeben**. Vier Unternehmen bekamen sogar den Zuschlag für öffentliche Aufträge und trugen somit zum Erfolg des Projekts bei.

Die Seminare und Workshops, die von den Partnern organisiert wurden, waren erfolgreich: mehr als 1 600 Teilnehmer besuchten diese Seminare und waren mit der Qualität der Vorträge und Präsentationen zufrieden (bis sehr zufrieden).

Der **praktische Leitfaden**, der in elektronischer Fassung in verschiedenen Sprachen verfügbar ist, umfasst sowohl allgemeine Themen in Bezug auf das öffentliche Auftragswesen in Europa als auch die spezifische Situation in den verschiedenen Partnerregionen. Er kann unter <http://www.alpps-online.com> herunter geladen werden.

Die **Unterstützungs- und Beratungstätigkeiten** waren hauptsächlich auf nationale/regionale Gesetzgebung und administrative oder technische Barrieren ausgerichtet. Der Umfang der Aktivitäten als Informations- und Beratungsstelle stand in Zusammenhang mit der Anzahl an Ausschreibungen, die von der jeweiligen Region verschickt wurden.

Ein wichtiger Aspekt des Projekts war auch die **Förderung von Partnerschaften** durch verschiedene Maßnahmen, wie z.B. persönliche Kontakte, Zusammenreffen und spezielle EDV-Systeme.

Das Projekt selbst wurde intensiv auf europäischer, nationaler und regionaler/lokaler Ebene vermarktet, einschließlich einer Präsentation auf der EIC-Jahreskonferenz in Bukarest im Oktober 2004.

Abschließend sollte erwähnt werden, dass der verbesserte Zugang zu Ausschreibungen unterhalb der EU-Schwellenwerte sowie weitergehende Informationen für KMU entscheidend sind. Vergabebehörden sollten diese Bemühungen unterstützen, indem sie die Transparenz der Verfahren erhöhen und die Ausschreibungen für grenzüberschreitend tätige Unternehmen öffnen.

Informationen allein genügen jedoch nicht, damit die KMU die vielen Schwierigkeiten bei grenzüberschreitenden Ausschreibungen überwinden können. Es ist auch viel Unterstützung vor Ort von Netzwerken wie z.B. dem EIC-Netzwerk erforderlich.

General Introduction

> Significance of the public procurement market

According to European Commission estimates, total public procurement amounted to €1500 billion in 2002, accounting for 16.3% of the Union's GDP. Moreover, there are clear signs that these expenditures will continue to increase in the future.

Public authorities purchase a wide variety of goods and services, ranging from daily consumer goods to works for large infrastructure projects, or highly specialized equipment and services. This means that almost every line of business can count public purchasers among their potential customers. Some economic branches are even specialized in the public market or offer their services exclusively to public bodies.

> Public procurement in the Alpine Space

However, in contrast to the private sector, the purchasing activities of public institutions rarely reach beyond national borders. According to studies conducted by the European Commission, less than 2 % of all public contracts are currently awarded to cross-border bidders, and only 9 % include some form of indirect cross-border procurement. Indirect cross-border activities arise when firms bid for contracts through subsidiaries or agents located in the country of tender.

This low proportion of cross-border contracts represents a major issue for the Alpine Space. In this important economic area, significant development opportunities for companies are inhibited by national borders. On the other hand, the lack of effective, open competition means that public authorities in these countries are missing out on opportunities to receive better proposals.

However, some success stories have shown that bidders – even small and medium-sized enterprises – are definitely capable of winning public contracts in other Alpine countries. It is extremely important that more and more companies follow suit. 18 % of all public contracts in Europe are awarded in the Alpine Space and public authorities spend more than 180 billion Euros within this area. Furthermore, in the near future, important projects of great economic potential will be realized in the Alpine Space: for instance, the Olympic Winter Games in Turin in 2006, the construction of a high-speed train connection between Lyon and Turin, the construction of the Brenner base tunnel, and high speed connections for the East-West and North-South main train lines.

> The Public procurement legislative landscape

Public contracts above the EU public procurement directive thresholds (directives 2004/17/CE and 2004/18/CE) are submitted to an almost harmonised legislation all around the EU. But below these thresholds, purchases need only meet the general rules of the Treaty and not the publication requirements included in the directives. Therefore, it becomes difficult to fully comprehend applicable legislation which is

regulated either at national or regional level.

Bearing in mind that SMEs are more specifically interested in smaller contracts (those under EU thresholds), and that they have no human or technical resources to adapt their strategy to every single legislation, it appears that the heterogeneity of the legislative framework is a major issue facing SMEs.

> ALPPS project objective

The objective of the ALPPS project was to implement solutions to improve access of SMEs to public contracts within the Alpine Space. To that effect, the main activities consisted in:

- Disseminating tenders electronically to a panel of pilot SMEs,
- Developing an electronic guide summarising all the useful legal information about public procurement in the Alpine Space,
- Organising workshops in all participating regions,
- Conducting a SWOT analysis of the public procurement situation in the Alpine Space. (subject of the present document).

> Geographical coverage of the ALPPS project



2. Working hypothesis

2. Working hypothesis

A variety of measures have been taken at institutional level to bring transparency to public bodies' purchasing processes and to dismantle formal barriers. The WTO Agreement on Government Procurement has been in force since the mid 1990s. This agreement was signed by all European Member States¹, which have enacted national legislation that applies at individual country level. By issuing relevant directives, the European Union itself has endeavoured to bring about the harmonisation of statutory regulations among its Member States.¹ The aim is to make the process transparent and to give all potential bidders equal access to public contracts. This should expose the procurement market to competition and enable public funds to be engaged as efficiently as possible.

In addition to the legal aspects, access to calls for tender is an important issue. Although the European Union created a database many years ago to publish all public invitations to tender above EU thresholds, issued in and by its European Member States, Switzerland has so far failed – despite a number of attempts – to set up any standard database.

Despite the myriad of public sector efforts, a number of studies have concluded that we are nowhere near the ideal scenario of extra-regional or even trans-national purchasing when awarding public contracts. In our day-to-day work as Euro Info Centres, we frequently receive inquiries about public procurement. Small and medium-sized companies often lack the necessary resources to bid for major contracts where the total order volume is above EU threshold values. The project thus concentrated on public contracts below these figures.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/publicprocurement/legislation_en.htm#packageimplement

Our direct contact with companies already bidding for government contracts – or those who would like to do so – **and our focus on public contracts below EU threshold values**, brought us to establish the following working hypothesis :

Small and medium-sized companies in the Alpine area hardly ever respond to public invitations to tender, because:

- > they do not have trans-national alliances or networks
- > they are not familiar enough with the specific national and regional characteristics of public procurement processes
- > it is difficult and time-consuming for them to gain access to public contracts below EU thresholds because they lack information and/or there is no obligation to publish calls for tender.

The project was structured and individual areas of work formulated on the basis of this threefold hypothesis.

Our aim was to draw attention to the business opportunities offered by public procurement and to provide specific details about partner regions through a series of information events. We also drew up a practical guide to fill the information gap in terms of legal and formal frameworks. All partners agreed to act as contacts for specific questions from companies in partner regions. Targeted campaigns also promoted contacts and partnerships between firms. The core of the project was the pilot phase where a total of 90 pilot received calls for tenders from partner regions over a twelve-month period.

3. ALPPS Pilot phase

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Purpose: give electronic access to sub-threshold calls for tenders published in the Alpine regions covered by the project, to 90 targeted pilot SMEs.

The difficulty consisted in determining which publication journals were mainly used by awarding bodies in each region in order, as far as possible, to collect exhaustive information for the SMEs and find the best solution for selecting tenders.

Publicity procedures in the Alpps regions

> **Rhone-Alps and Alsace regions (France):** In France, a restricted list of journals – 90 different local journals for Rhone-Alps and Alsace regions – is authorized to publish tender notices above 90 000 €. These journals are also commonly used for contracts below 90 000 €. Some private companies do provide monitoring services for tenders published in these local journals.

The solution adopted by the French partners: subscription to a private French database providing tenders for Rhone-Alps and Alsace regions, through a Push service.

> **Piedmont Region (Italy):** By Regional law, awarding authorities are compelled to publish their work tender notices in the Piedmont Region database. But supplies and services tenders can be published elsewhere (any journal or website is suitable). This makes gathering tenders rather difficult.

The solution adopted by the Italian partners: the Piedmont Region, partner of the project, decided to expand its database to encompass supplies and services contracts. Although there is no obligation to publish services and supplies in the database, the Piedmont Region demonstrated its commitment by convincing awarding authorities to do so. The Chamber of Commerce of Turin adapted the search functions of their tender selection tool to include the enlarged Piedmont Region database. When available, they also provided pilot companies with information concerning tenders published by the TOROC, the Turin Official Committee for the Olympic Games.

> **Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria (Germany):** Under the EU Thresholds, the contracting authority, when publishing a tender notice, is allowed to choose the publication medium. It is therefore difficult to define the precise publication medium that a specific group of contracting authorities may choose. However, ministries and authorities

of the federal states are more inclined to publish project notices in the “Staatsanzeiger” of the specific region (regional submission journals).

The solution adopted by the German partners: a subscription to the Staatsanzeiger of both Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria Regions, through a push service.

> Vaud, Zürich and Ticino cantons (Switzerland): Since Switzerland does not belong to the European Union, the European directives do not apply to public procurement in Switzerland. However, Switzerland has signed various international agreements which apply procurement regulations, similar to those of the European Union,

to larger contracts. As a result of the bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU, public contracts above EU-thresholds are freely accessible to Swiss companies, even at local level. The same applies for European companies bidding at Swiss local level. However, below EU thresholds, cantonal regulations apply to public contracts.

The solution adopted by our Swiss partner: OSEC already operates a monitoring service covering international bids. They enlarged their database to cover Swiss tenders published in the cantons of Vaud, Zürich and Ticino. Tenders have been collected from different newspapers, and entered manually into their tender service database.

Summary of the different solutions adopted by the Alpps partners:

EIC responsible for the selection of tenders	Selection criteria	Monitoring the following press media
GRENOBLE (Rhone-Alps and Alsace tenders)	Keywords and activity fields	BOAMP (Bulletin officiel d'annonces de marchés publics) + regional journals + magazines dedicated to public tenders
MUNICH / LAHR (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg tenders)	CPV codes and/or keywords	Bayerischer staatsanzeiger Staatsanzeiger für Baden Württemberg GmbH (Regional official journals)
TURIN (Piedmont tenders)	CPV codes (no keywords)	All works contracts Supplies and services : those published in the Piedmont Region database
ZURICH (Vaud, Ticino and Zürich tenders)	Keywords	Cantons and municipalities tenders Tenders from main public authorities in the cantons (hospitals, ...)

Selection of pilot companies

90 SME's were selected (15 SMEs x 6 partners) and participated in the pilot phase. The pilot companies were selected among those that were already accustomed to submitting tenders in their own countries, had linguistic competences within their company for translating tenders and were working in the following fields of activity: NTIC, mountain equipment, environment, transport, hydro-energy.

The main reason motivating pilot companies to participate in the project was their interest in accessing information on tenders published abroad. Pilot companies were all trying to expand their activity outside their region, and the countries of the Alpine space represented a natural outlet. They considered the project as an opportunity for them to better understand neighbouring markets and learn about the awarding procedures used by the public sectors there.

They also were interested in getting practical assistance from local helpdesks, and transmitting tender opportunities to their local partners when they had one. Some companies also took advantage of the project to build partnerships with other European companies.

Organisation of the pilot phase

In each region, the partners were responsible for collecting tenders and entering the pilot companies' profiles into their respective databases. Initially, they were asked to make sure that the selected tenders did indeed match the pilot companies' activity field and that selection criteria conformed to the company's expectations.

Following this initial control period, tender selections were sent directly to the mail-box of the pilot company (with a copy to the regional helpdesk they belonged to). Pilot companies received tender opportunities over a period of one year (ending in April 2005).

Quantitative and qualitative results

The following results are based on a questionnaire sent to all participating pilot companies in February 2005. The English version is included in the annex. In total, 72 enterprises completed the questionnaire, providing a reasonable quantitative and qualitative analysis.

a) general appreciation by pilot companies

More than 12 000 tenders were sent from May 10th, 2004 to April 30th, 2005 to the 90 pilot companies.

The number of tender notices received by these companies during the project's life varied considerably according to their field of activity and the country they were located in. While a substantial number of calls for tenders, in sectors such as public works, were published in the covered journals, few tenders were published for very specific fields - such as industrial equipment or environmental technologies - thus, minimising opportunities to submit.

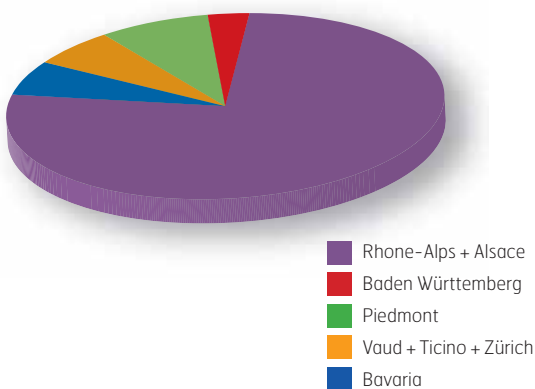
Especially in Germany and Switzerland, several companies offering consulting services were among the pilot companies. The pilot phase clearly revealed that such services are not published very often. In contrast, no typical construction company participated in the project, despite the exciting prospect of receiving relevant calls for tenders.

Furthermore, the different national/regional legislative contexts created big differences between the numbers of readily accessible tender notices in the different participating regions. As shown in Graph 1, there are far more tender notices sent from France than from other countries. The reason is that comprehensive databases, such as the one used for the French tenders, hardly exist in other countries. As a result, while French companies received very few calls for tenders from other regions, Piedmont companies, on the contrary, were quite well informed of the different opportunities existing in the French market. Such discrepancies can create a situation of unfair competition between these two neighbouring areas.

The statistics shown in Graph 1 must however be weighted. Indeed, the German partners, for instance, quality-checked all tender notices before sending them to the pilot companies. This may have reduced the total number of tenders sent, but it increased the quality of selections.

Graph 1

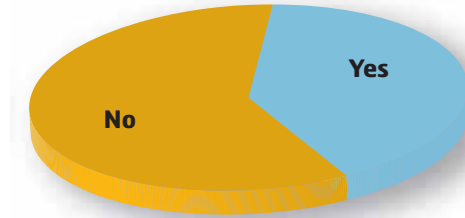
> ALPPS - Origin of tender notices sent from May 10th, 2004 to April 30th, 2005



As a result, only 40% of the companies were fully satisfied with the tenders received, while 60% of them were not entirely satisfied with the outcome. (Ref. Graph 2).

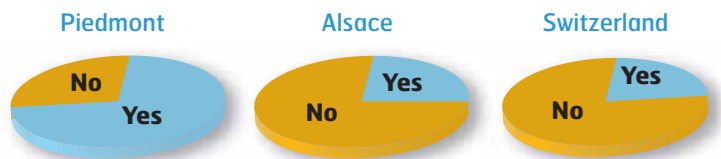
Graph 2

> Were you satisfied with the tenders received from the other Alpine space regions?

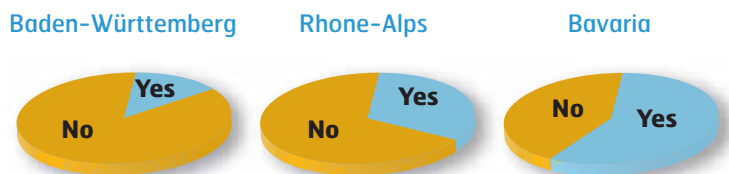


As can be seen in the graphs 3 to 8, the companies' opinion on the pilot phase vary according to their region of origin :

Graph 3 - 4 - 5



Graph 6 - 7 - 8

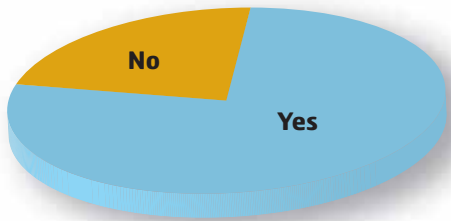


Even though some pilot companies did indeed receive tender notices related to their core activity and were satisfied with the selection, others received tenders that did not always match their profiles. A good selection of tenders is very often based on both keywords and activity codes. However, not all software tools used by the partners offered this possibility. Inadequacies often arose because of difficulties in translating keywords. All the keywords must be translated into the different languages and some tender opportunities can be missed if the exact keyword mentioned in the tender notice is not employed. A product classification system, such as the CPV nomenclature (Common Procurement Vocabulary) used for European tenders above thresholds, would be perfect in many cases. However, this codification is not compulsory under EU thresholds.

The question "Would you make use of a database containing all European tenders below thresholds?" clearly showed that there is a demand for quick and easy access to tenders that are otherwise difficult to track down. 78 % of respondent companies would use such a database (graph 9)

Graph 9

> Would you make use of a database containing all European tenders below thresholds?



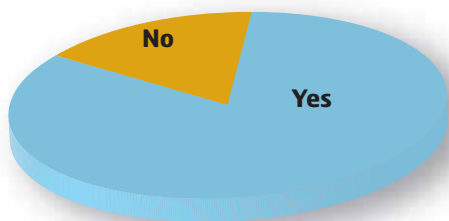
Despite the mitigated results of the appreciation concerning the tenders received during the pilot phase, most pilot companies confirmed their interest in a tool capable of supplying them with information on published tenders in neighbouring countries. As a matter of fact, companies suffer from a lack of information, especially for tenders which are below European thresholds. Furthermore, some pilot companies pinpointed the need to at least partially translate tender notices for greater efficiency.

Last but not least, 84 % of the companies that completed the questionnaire would participate in a similar programme again (graph 10). This result is very encouraging for the project partners; it means that the SMEs have gained a benefit from their participation; either in terms of regulatory information or in terms of knowledge about neighbouring markets. In some cases, they learnt how to adapt their product to a different market, and how to better communicate about their products when addressing foreign public entities.

The main advantage of the Alpps project, according to the pilot companies, remains the facilitated access to information which is otherwise difficult to obtain.

Graph 10

> Would you participate in a project like Alpps again?



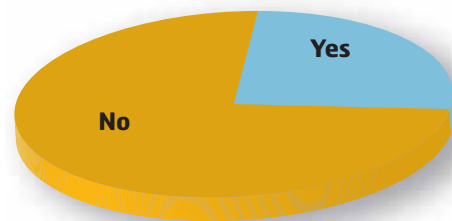
b) Participation of pilot companies in public tendering

27% of the pilot companies that completed the evaluation questionnaire took advantage of the Alpps programme to submit a bid outside their national borders (i.e. 18 companies – see Graph 11). Four were awarded a public contract, i.e. 22 % of applying companies! They were all supported by their local partner. These results are excellent compared to normal figures and even more so, given that some pilot companies were still awaiting the outcome of their candidacy at the time of the editorial cut-off deadline.

It would therefore appear that if SMEs are given the information and individual support they need to submit a bid abroad, they are quite capable of winning, even without a local partner.

Graph 11

> Have you applied for one or several tenders during the pilot phase?



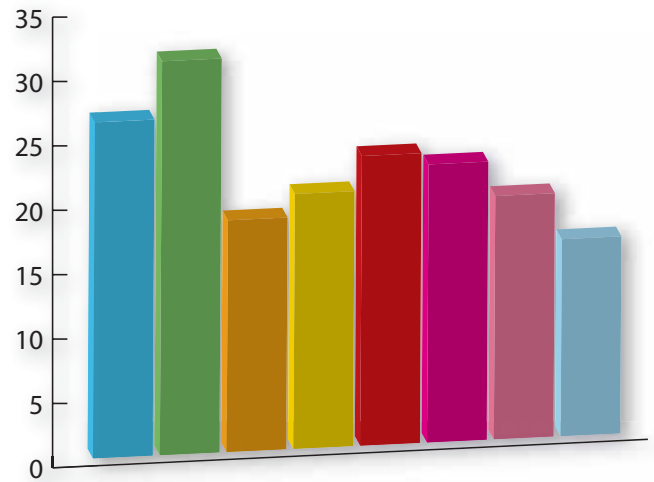
Indeed, it must be mentioned that some pilot companies did not submit bids by themselves but through their local agent. Alpps allowed them to inform their agents/partners in good time and receive follow-up information on the agent's activities.

Problems the companies face when applying for a tender abroad

When it comes to applying for a public contract beyond national borders, the main problems SMEs are likely to encounter are listed in Graph 12 (the figure corresponds to the number of times the problem has been mentioned by the pilot companies).

- lack of knowledge of the legal framework abroad
- necessity to apply in the language of the tender
- required documentation too complex and different from the one of our country
- difficulty in finding suitable partners in the tendering country
- heavy competition by local companies
- assumption that bids of foreign companies are automatically rejected
- difficult access to publication of foreign public tenders
- systematic technical barriers

Graph 12



Other points mentioned :

- > lack of time to prepare the submission in a foreign language
- > very few tenders are split into job-lots in Germany (while SMEs are often only interested in one lot)
- > difficulty in obtaining complementary information from public entities
- > lack of transparency in the procedures

Success Story

Testimonial Italian company



Mrs Lilli Angela, Carloangela S.r.l., Ivrea (TO)

« I am very glad to express our satisfaction as an enterprise for having been awarded a French tender for furnishing a cafeteria. Thanks to the Turin Chamber of commerce and in particular to the ALPPS project, even a small enterprise such as ours can face European competitors.

We approached International tenders timidly since we were especially worried about French formalities, which are even more complex than Italian ones. We were also worried about the requirement to provide relevant documentation in French.

After reading various tenders very closely, we identified one that was targeted to our activity. We dedicated our entire team - from the designer to the administrative employee, and with the help of the Chamber of commerce - to preparing the application for the tender. During the days that followed, we wondered if we had made any mistakes and if we would be informed. Therefore it was with great delight that we received confirmation from the awarding authority that our candidacy had been retained.

Now we can face the next tenders with more confidence. Projects such as Alpps will certainly contribute to the growth of our enterprise.

Testimonial Swiss company:



Dominik Angst, ITV Geomatik AG, Regensdorf-Watt

“As a small enterprise that is active both nationally and internationally, it is important for us to find foreign tenders with little effort. In addition to the well-known channels, ALPPS offers us the possibility of learning about foreign sub-threshold tenders without checking all the relevant publications individually.

With the self-defined, specific profiles, we only receive tenders that are really relevant for us. We greatly appreciate this service and the network behind it.”

4. Other activities linked to the project

4. Other activities linked to the project

4.1 Workshops and seminars

Within the framework of the project, the partners organised a series of workshops about public procurement in the Alpine Space. More than 1600 participants attended these workshops (1330 SMEs and 270 public bodies representatives). Moreover, evaluations of the seminars display a high level of satisfaction among participants.

The two main objectives of the workshops were the general enhancement of awareness regarding the possibility of bidding for transnational public contracts and the diffusion of practical and useful information about public procurement in Alpine space countries.

Furthermore, the first workshops also served as an opportunity to recruit companies for the pilot phase. The prospect of meeting other pilot companies interested in business cooperation gave more added value to the seminars.

The initial seminars mainly focused on general aspects of public procurement. The partners organised informative meetings covering topics such as regulations and developments of public procurement in the European Union or in the Alpine Space.

The number of participants in these seminars is remarkable: 230 participants in Grenoble and 120 both in Turin and Munich underlined SMEs' considerable need for information about public procurement.

For the consecutive seminars, the focus shifted to country-specific events, where partners highlighted opportunities and specific procedures in neighbouring countries. Not unexpectedly, the number of participants decreased in comparison with the more general seminars. On the other hand, these events provided an opportunity to impart information to a well defined target group.

Since there is no obligation to publish public tenders below EU thresholds in some regions, the project partner in Turin followed a different approach as regards to the target groups in one of their seminars. Instead of SMEs, the EIC Turin invited representatives of local authorities in charge of awarding public tenders. By stressing the importance of tenders below threshold especially for smaller enterprises, the authorities were encouraged to publish more tenders in various branches in order to improve the situation on the supply side. It remains to be seen to what extent these efforts will figure in larger numbers of published tenders below threshold in the years to come.

As far as Grenoble is concerned, they chose to decentralise their action in the main Rhone-Alps areas: Lyon (Rhône), Saint-Etienne (Loire) and of course Grenoble (Isère).

It is clear that not every individual question or information need can be dealt with during a workshop or a seminar. Therefore and for the benefit of customers, it is absolutely essential to offer companies contact points where they can seek individual advice on specific questions (please refer to point 4.3).

4.2. Practical Guide and alpps-online.com Website

The project partners' experience in their daily work has shown that companies are often reticent when it comes to taking part in transnational invitations to tender. We believe that one of the reasons for this reticence – besides the language barrier and a variety of legal conditions – is the lack of information presented in a standardised form.

The information gaps can be divided roughly into three types of information:

- 1) What is the legal framework?
- 2) Where are calls for tender below the threshold value published?
- 3) Who are the major customers?

The Alpps guide begins by explaining the European situation with regard to public procurement. This looks into the legal foundation, EU threshold values and the definition of public contracting authorities, as well as the procedures, time-frames, evidence which may be required and legal protection. The various sections also give practical tips and cross-references.

Further sections investigate the situation in each partner region: France (focusing on Rhone-Alps and Alsace Regions), Germany

(focusing on Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Italy (focusing on Piedmont region) and Switzerland (focusing on Vaud, Ticino and Zürich cantons), but also Austria and Slovenia, thanks to the strong support received from our non official partners there. As a matter of fact, the Alpps electronic guide covers all of the Alpine Space countries.

Each section has been structured identically in the form of questions and answers. The reader can thus find the answer to a question quickly and can easily make comparisons with other partner regions.

The following questions are answered for all partner regions:

- What are the legal regulations for public procurement?
- What are the national and regional media for publishing contract notices?
- Which procurement procedures are used?
- Which time limits must be considered?
- What evidence can be requested in the course of an application?
- Who wins? Which award criteria apply?
- Where can I file a complaint?
- The most important contracting authorities in....?
- Where can I obtain information?

The project team prepared the guide for a paper edition, but the whole guide is also available electronically. The guide currently appears in German, French, Italian and English. A dedicated website has been created in order to make the guide available to the greatest possible number of interested parties. The guide can be downloaded in pdf format from www.alpps-online.com and provides a useful reference tool. In addition to the guide, the website also gives information on the project and the parties involved.

The website has been up and running since June 2004 and has so far been visited by 1500 users. Some local economic actors found this electronic guide very useful for the companies, and already encouraged their members to download it from Alpps website.

Alpps website home page



4.3 Acting as helpdesk for SMEs

During the project's life, the ALPPS partners acted as helpdesks for their local companies (pilot or non pilot companies) involved in public procurement at international level.

They relied on the other Alpps partners in order to give acutely precise answers to questions related to submitting bids in the Alpine regions.

Most of the questions received by helpdesks resulted from misunderstandings of national/regional legislation or administrative/technical barriers that exist in each country with respect to foreign bidders.

For instance, some national agreements or national technical norms are required by awarding authorities, especially for health and safety regulations. Many certificates or forms are required from bidders. However, most of these certificates are totally new for foreign bidders and need detailed explanations. We often helped local companies to fill in the required forms.

Some examples of questions received from the companies :

- a)** In order to submit a bid in France, a German company must provide a document specifying that it complies with article R324-4 of the French Labour code. What does this article deal with?
- b)** An Italian company is willing to apply for a call for tender covering the supply of photovoltaic panels in France. Among the documents needed, the basic one is a certificate issued by the French body Qualifelec. But, apparently, such a certificate is only issued on behalf of French companies.
- c)** Do French companies have to be registered with German tax authorities when providing services to public authorities? Do they have to be registered with the chambers of handicraft when doing construction work for public authorities in Germany?

> An overview of the main problems facing companies when applying for foreign tenders is set forth in section 3.



As Euro Info Centres, Alpps partners participate in the Interactive Policy Making (IPM) programme launched by the European Commission (DG Internal Market). They collect spontaneous information from businesses about their daily problems relating to different EU policies (including public procurement), and record them in the Commission's Feedback database. This listening device allows for a constant monitoring of the application of existing legislation and provides concrete input for new policy initiatives. Thousands of cases are collected annually and several Directorate Generals have already started to use it as input for policy making.

The ALPPS project gave the partners the possibility to increment the IPM database with cases linked to the public procurement policy.

4.4 Promoting partnership between SMEs

Submitting a bid abroad requires competences that are often hard to find within the company. Building international partnerships is certainly the best way to win a tender abroad. Indeed, the partner, located in the awarding country, has the linguistic competences and sufficient procedural knowledge of its own region. The partner knows all the tricks and tips and how to approach local awarding authorities.

The Alpps partners tried to promote partnerships between SMEs at different levels:

- partnerships between pilot companies and local companies were encouraged whenever their activity fields were complementary
- pilot company profiles were inserted into the Business Cooperation Database (database managed, for the Euro Info Centre network, by DG Enterprises, European Commission)*
- small match-making events were organized. For instance organisation of meetings between Grenoble and Turin companies in Turin (Italy) in February 2005.
- Promotion of partnership between Italian, Bavarian and Austrian companies on the occasion of an event that took place in Bolzano (Italy) on Feb. 25th, 2005, in the construction sector.

* Business Cooperation Database has been created to answer the business co-operation needs of SMEs by inserting a sufficient critical mass of profiles into the database.

Testimonial French company



M. Alain Gratier, Directeur des marchés, OPAC38 (Isère)

I had great pleasure participating in the match-making event organised by CCI Turin on February 10th, 2005. We are located in the Grenoble area and are looking for different economic actors (architects, design agencies, industrial companies and service suppliers) capable of assisting our company in implementing our sustainable development policy.

The sincere and cordial exchanges with the Piedmont companies enabled us to evaluate mutual difficulties or misunderstandings with regard to the commercial transactions involved in public tendering and compare notes. A certain number of opportunities arose, offering short-term prospects for beneficial commercial exchanges.

5. ALPPS promotion

5. ALPPS promotion

The ALPPS project has been promoted at various levels:

European level:

- > information to the Euro Info Centre network through the EIC website (<http://eic.cec.eu.int/>). You will find a general presentation of the EIC network in annex 1
- > participation at the Bucharest EIC annual conference in 2004 (a booth was manned by the ALPPS partners at the Bucharest Market Place)
- > information to DG Enterprise (European Commission), office in charge of public procurement matters
- > creation of a website dedicated to the Alpps project <http://www.alpps-online.com>

National level:

- > information on the Euro Info Centre national websites
- > national ministries in charge of SME policies

Local/regional levels:

- > information to local authorities (regions, cities, cantons...)
- > publication of press articles in local journals
- > publication of articles in the partners newspapers
- > organisation of seminars on the topic of Public Procurement (invitations sent to local companies + information on the corresponding websites)
- > publication of leaflets
- > etc.



Alpps booth at the Market Place
Annual conference of the EIC network – Bucharest – October 2004

6. Conclusions and perspectives

6. Conclusions and perspectives

The project's innovative approach can not be denied. There really is a lack of information concerning tenders which are published (or not) at local level. If they want to conquer new markets, Alpine companies are compelled to seek better access to Alpine space contracts including public contracts.

SMEs are really interested in a single database that would collect both European and regional tender notices, provided these notices are partly translated in different languages. They are looking for a website portal able to give them information on applying regulations and also direct access to tenders. They would appreciate this database being enlarged to incorporate other regions (Lombardia, Austria, Slovenia in the Alpine Space, but also outside the Alpine Space). But today, such a database does not exist.

Most of the companies that participated in the project would like to pursue the experience. However, at the present stage, the Alpps partners have decided to stop the selection of tenders. Indeed, the difference between procedures in France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland makes it difficult to harmonise the number and the quality of tenders received by participants. Unless there is a clear legislation at regional and/or national level, making the publication of tenders compulsory on defined journals, competition between alpine companies will be unfair. In the same way, unless there is a common codification used for the classification of tenders, it will remain difficult to guarantee the matching of selected tenders with company profiles.

But access to information itself is not enough: the many difficulties facing SMEs when applying abroad show us that they also need strong local support from networks such as the EIC network. EICs can assist companies in a practical way, and answer any questions related to public procurement regulations in Europe.

Companies are also well aware that the best way to win a contract abroad is to develop a partnership with local partners, mostly because of the language used in tendering. Networks such as the EIC network could help them in this crucial activity, by providing matching services.

We should not forget the role played by public authorities: they should make their procedures more transparent and publish tender notices in well-known media so as to increase company awareness. They should also bear in mind that opening public tenders to foreign bidders could bring advantages such as lower prices or new technologies.

The Alpps partners have been very happy working together. The synergy developed between the different regions and their experience in public procurement will surely result in the development of new services for local companies seeking to submit tenders abroad.

At the term of the project, the Alpps partners will continue to update the electronic guide on public procurement and to serve as helpdesks by following company activities and promoting partnerships with alpine companies.



The ALPPS partners - Grenoble - April 2005

ANNEX 1. PRESENTATION OF **THE PARTNERS**

The Euro Info centre Network

All the ALPPS partners (except Piedmont Region) are members of the Euro Info Centre Network.

Established in 1987, the Euro Info Centre (EIC) network has grown from 39 centres to more than 320, further to the last call for applications. This network is managed by enterprise Directorate general (European Commission).

Euro Info Centres inform, advise and assist local SMEs on a wide range of subjects:

- Eu funding programmes: Structural Funds and other funding opportunities
- European Union Legislation: directives and regulations and their national implementation on EC marking, work safety, food labelling etc.
- Public procurement information
- customs and VAT questions
- market access information: regulatory framework and sectorial information in the other Member states
- Organisation of seminars and meetings tailored to the regional economic context
- Production of information bulletins, in collaboration with other local economic authorities and of guides on subjects of relevant interest to SMEs like financing opportunities.



The Alps partners do participate in the Interactive Policy Making (IPM) launched by the European commission (DG Internal Market); refer to point 4.3 of the present document.

To learn more about the EIC network :

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/networks/eic/eic.html>



Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Grenoble (CCI Grenoble) – France

Its territory covers 2/3 south of the Isère department with 24 000 companies/trades, representing 169 600 salaried jobs, nearly 45% of which are in the industrial sector, building and public works (BPW).

Some 533 collaborators work in the different departments of the CCI Grenoble.

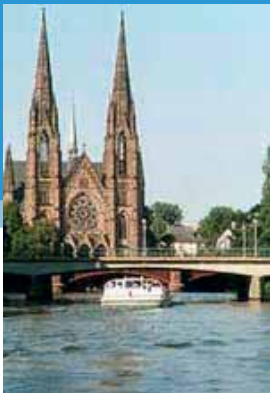
The budget of the CCI Grenoble is about 54 million euros per year.

The CCI Grenoble:

- Represents companies addressing public authorities on subjects such as quality of environment and work surroundings,
- Promotes and supports the creation of companies
- Acts in favour of corporate performance
 - > guides to industrial performance
 - > promotes the evolution of the commercial and tourism sector
 - > facilitates international development of companies in Isère through Grex, the International Trade Centre of CCI Grenoble
 - > organises knowledge sharing
- Trains people in corporate skills and tomorrow's professions
- Manages and promotes the Grenoble economic centre

GREX, International Trade centre of the CCI Grenoble, assists companies that wish to develop their business at international level, giving technical and commercial assistance. GREX, as a member of the **Euro Info Centre network**, has also developed skills in European matters, and more particularly in the Public procurement field. Grex also belongs to the **World Trade Centers network**.

It offers companies a full range of public procurement services (monitoring systems for French and European tenders, assistance to companies bidding abroad...). ALPPS gave GREX the opportunity to cover sub threshold tenders in the neighbouring regions of the Alpine Space. GREX is the Leading Partner of the ALPPS project.



Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Strasbourg et du Bas-Rhin (CCISBR) - France

As a Public organisation, the CCISBR represents all the companies registered in the trade register of the Bas-Rhin area (part of the Alsace Region).

Alsace includes Bas-Rhin (Strasbourg) and Haut-Rhin (Mulhouse and Colmar) regions. With a total surface area of 8280 km², Alsace is the smallest French region. It is 190 km length and 50 km broad. Alsace is located between the Rhine and the Vosges, at the very border of Germany and Switzerland. The Bas-Rhin covers half of Alsace.

30 331 companies are registered in Bas-Rhin. These companies represent more than 180 000 employed people: 24% in the industrial sector, 14% in trade and 6% in construction and public works.

Some 500 people work for CCISBR. **CCISBR' services to companies** encompass the following departments: trade, tourism, legal service, economic and information, entrepreneurship in France, Centre of formalities for companies, industry and international, airport management.

The Industry and International Direction is located in the so-called MCIS: Maison du Commerce International de Strasbourg, which counts 35 people. **MCIS is the International Trade Center of CCISBR.** Its missions consist in assisting companies in their international strategy. MCIS also supports young entrepreneurs and start-up 's willing to develop business activity at international level. MCIS is a member of the World Trade Center network (international network) and of the Euro Info Centre network (EIC network).

The EIC offers companies many skills in European matters. It developed a strong expertise in EU legislative topics, mainly those related to the New Approach directives or CE Marking directives.

The EIC participated in the ALPPS project to develop new competencies in the field of public procurement. The ALPPS project was an opportunity for the EIC to diversify its activities while offering regional companies a service that would enable them to strengthen their presence in alpine boarder markets.



Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura di Torino (CCIAA Torino) - Italy

The Torino Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture (Turin Chamber of Commerce) is a public body which operates throughout its province, with 200.000 economic businesses officially registered. The aim of our Chamber of Commerce is to meet the economic and development needs of the province in three main areas: administration, promotion of the region, defence of businesses and consumers.

Further information concerning the structure and the activities of the Turin Chamber of Commerce are available on the www.to.camcom.it web site, section "For International visitors".

The Euro Info Centre IT375 has been an official member of the EIC network since 1989. It's hosted by the Chamber of commerce of Turin and it is part of the Promotional Department, that employs nearly 50 persons.

In addition to our Euro Info Centre, this Department includes the following offices:

- Technological Innovation (Innovation Relay Centre)
- Foreign Trade: trade documents (i.e. certificates of Origin) - Internationalisation services
- Promotion of local economy
- New Businesses assistance (business start-up guidance)
- Economic surveys

The Turin Chamber of Commerce is active in the sector of public tenders with the ALPPS project and also with other initiatives, such as:

> ALERT PROJECT: Olympic Games 2006

Thanks to an agreement with the two most important contracting authorities for the Olympic Games 2006 (Agenzia Torino 2006 and TOROC), our Chamber can offer to Piedmont enterprises an information service free of charge concerning the participation to the Olympic tenders.

> Public Tenders and International Projects

Many countries offer interesting business opportunities thanks to their economy high increase rate and their resources low costs. However, these countries can also be risky for their political-economical instability. Our Chamber offers information on international organisations tenders covering the public or private sector.

> TENDER Service

Support to enterprises participating to international projects and tenders. It provides free of charge services concerning information on public tenders, technical and training assistance.



Auftragsberatungszentrum Bayern e.v. (ABZ Munich) – Germany

ABZ Munich is the first stop shop for questions related to public procurement in the German Bundesland Bavaria. On the one hand, the ABZ offers effective support to companies bidding for public contracts on regional, national and international levels. On the other hand, the ABZ helps purchasers to advertise contracts according to public procurement regulations and to find suitable suppliers. Founded in 1954, the ABZ is well experienced in liaising between public purchasers and companies that supply to the public market. ABZ is a member of the German 'Auftragsberatungsstellen' network, i.e. public procurement information centres mentioned in German public procurement law as official contact points in different German federal states. ABZ cooperates closely with domestic and foreign partners from private and public sectors.

Shareholders of the ABZ are the Bavarian Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the Association of the Bavarian Chambers of Handicrafts and Small Businesses. The Bavarian Ministry of Trade and Commerce is the supervising authority and sponsor of the ABZ.

Key services and information products of the ABZ are:

- the tender service C@TS – Computer Aided Tender Services, that comprises tender notices from national and international tender databases
- a supplier database which currently lists 4000 Bavarian firms that are interested in goods and service contracts in the public sector
- a short-list service for public authorities looking for potential suppliers
- consultancy in the field of public procurement
- training on public procurement for companies and public authorities



Industrie und Handelskammer Südlicher Oberrhein (IHK SO) – Germany

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) "Suedlicher Oberrhein" (Southern Upper Rhine) is a public body. About 100 people work at the CCI. Its head office is situated in Freiburg and a second office is located in Lahr.

The CCI's territory covers the administrative districts of Freiburg, Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Emmendingen and Ortenau. The CCI Suedlicher Oberrhein represents the interests of about 50.000 member companies with nearly 350.000 employees subject to social insurance contributions, about 30% of which work in manufacturing sectors.

The CCI Suedlicher Oberrhein

- has an intermediary role between the regional economy and the public authorities such as the government
- performs public functions such as the organisation of vocational training and examinations, the certification of invoices or the appointment of experts
- assists its members as counsellor or mediator in all business matters
- informs and advises companies in many fields, for example foreign trade, business start-ups, taxes and legislation, financing and support programmes, technology and innovation, environment and vocational training

The Euro Info Centre (EIC) at Lahr is part of the CCI's service centre. It informs, advises and assists companies on Community matters and helps them take advantage of the opportunities offered by Europe.

Our EIC has a special expertise in public procurement due to the fact that it functions as a regional competence centre for public procurement. We offer a public tender service, organise seminars and workshops on public procurement in the EU and provide tailor-made information and advice on how to tackle public tenders.



PIEDMONT REGION - Italy

A politico-administrative institution has existed in Piedmont historical land since 1970.

The first legislature called the system "Regionalism", but it should be remembered that the Italian Constitution gave autonomy of government without forgoing the principle of unity.

Today the aim definitely reaches higher; the federalism process awards regions with a great deal of institutional autonomy based on the principle of subsidiaries. This principle translates as: "more can be done at a lower level than at the higher state level". Once again the Piedmont region wishes to be at the forefront of this historic chapter of our national heritage.

The Piedmont Region is a public local authority invested with the powers and functions of observing constitutional principles. Further to the reform which changed the fifth section of the Italian Constitution (L. cost. 3/2001) it was also invested with administrative functions and financial autonomy;

It enforces legislative power in issues which do not come under the exclusive competence of the State. Besides, the reform invested the Piedmont Region with legislative power for other unmentioned matters, such as regulatory power. The Piedmont Region is also a partner in innovative projects with other Italian and European regions.

The functions attached to Piedmont Region are exerted in a capillary and detailed fashion through sub-administrative management offices called "Direzioni". Some examples of these are: "Public Building Works Management" (Direzione Opere Pubbliche), Industry Management (Direzione Industria), "Land Transport Management" (Direzioni Trasporti), which are organised in public sectors.

Within the ambit of the Buildings Works management, the "Public building works Sector" with its "Building Works Observatory" database, set up by its own substructure, monitors information concerning public works, such as the notification and follow-up of building contractor awards, hired manpower, works supervision, conditions of safety at work and so on.



OSEC - Switzerland

Osec Business Network Switzerland is officially mandated by the Swiss federal authorities to promote Swiss business activities abroad. It has 70 employees and is present in all three language regions of Switzerland. The headquarters are located in Zurich, which is the economical centre of Switzerland. Since its reorganisation in 2001, Osec Business Network Switzerland has put much emphasis on cooperation with its national and international network partners.

Osec and the Euro Info Correspondence Centre Switzerland (EICC CH-611) offer a wide variety of services. They range from first contacts and the transfer of basic information to market and opportunity studies. Furthermore, Osec Business Network Switzerland also organises Swiss participation at foreign trade fairs.

As a third country, Switzerland maintains just one Euro Info Correspondence Centre instead of several Euro Info Centres. However, it consists of three offices in different language regions, working together very closely. This constellation requires that our EICC covers the whole spectrum of European topics. In addition to questions concerning the Common Market, we often receive inquiries about the difference in legislation between Switzerland and the European Union.

We offer thematic dossiers on our website, covering, among others, the most-requested subjects including bilateral agreements between the EU and Switzerland, CE marking, e-Business, enlargement, customs, and VAT. Furthermore, we regularly publish information brochures, send out an e-newsletter twice a month and cooperate in organising seminars and information events. Another major field of our activity lies in our role as official distributors of EU publications, perfectly complementing the aforementioned activities.





Wirtschaftskammer Tirol – Austria (supporter of the project)

The EIC Innsbruck – with 5 employees – is located in the Tyrolean Economic Chamber, which represents all economic actors in the Tyrol and is specialized in public law. Inquiries usually come from small and medium sized enterprises from the Tyrol, from our host organisation or from other EIC offices, who require information concerning the European Single Market.

We support our clients with information in the fields of EU institutions, EU legislation in general, competition rules, EU support programmes, CE-marking and the European Single Market in general. We have a specialist in EU support programmes for research and technological development as well as one for customs and taxes.

Moreover, we help our clients find business partners abroad, organise conferences on EU related topics and – of course – together with the responsible and competent departments of our host organisation, advise on public procurement. To this effect, we provide our clients with information on where to find national and EU-tenders, what to do in the event of unfair decisions and where to complain. If a tender is transacted by an SME, we also offer information about threshold values, different tendering methods, which authorities must be informed (national and EU-authorities), which forms must be completed and where to get them.

On the whole, we pursue the target to be the first-stop-shop for SMEs in Tyrol for EU related questions.



Euro Info Centre Ljubljana – Slovenia (supporter of the project)

Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) as a host structure of **EIC Ljubljana** was established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in 1992 with an aim to co-ordinate the Small Business Support Network and entrepreneurship promotion programmes.

The mission of SBDC is to promote entrepreneurship development, create support environments in Slovenia and accelerate the development of entrepreneurial culture. SBDC coordinates the Small Business Support Network and other SME supporting institutions at national, regional and local levels. SBDC co-ordinates their entrepreneurial initiatives and communicates them further, via Small Business Support Network and the Network of Local Business Centres of Slovenia (LBC), to the users – target groups: micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

EIC Ljubljana, within the SBDC, supplies SMEs with general information on EU, programmes, initiatives and public procurement, internationalization, information on single EU market, EU standards, EU and national legislation, European sources of financing catering for SMEs, information about business fairs, conferences, seminars, workshops and round tables as well as special services offered by other institutions and information networks.

We daily monitor public procurement tenders, published in the Official Journal of the EU and in the Slovene Official Journal and their summaries are published on our website: <http://eic.pcmg.si/sl/>. We offer companies opportunities to access periodic electronic information on public procurement tenders published in the Official Journal of the EU, following the criteria they choose (CPV code, procedure, country). We also monitor the EU tenders and the announcement of tenders within EU programmes that are open for Slovene enterprises and publish them on our web site. Among our services we can also mention business co-operation - offers and demands where SMEs can find suitable business partners or submit their offer or demand.

Together with the other two EICs in Slovenia (EIC Koper and EIC Maribor) Euro Info Centre Ljubljana publishes EIC News that cover information on European Union, European Commission, EU programmes and projects, activities of Slovene EIC Network and entrepreneurial environments. We also offer information through the electronic EIC News.

ANNEX 2. PILOT PHASE ALPPS: **FINAL SURVEY****Dear Sir or Madam,**

You participate in the Interreg project ALPPS as a pilot company. In the context of this pilot phase, you receive public tenders of one or several regions in the alpine space: Piedmont (Italy), Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria (Germany), Vaud, Zurich, and Ticino (Switzerland) as well as Alsace and Rhône-Alpes (France).

The pilot phase of ALPPS, which started in May 2004, is coming to an end on 30 April 2005. The following questionnaire will help the project team with the evaluation of the pilot phase.

- 1) We participated in the project ALPPS because
- 2) Were you satisfied with the received tenders?
 Yes, because.....
 No, because
- 3a) Have you applied for one or several tenders?
 Yes, for a tender / tenders from.....
 No
- 3b) If yes, has your bid been accepted?
 Yes
 No. Reason for non-consideration
- 4) In your opinion, which of the following are the main obstacles for companies that apply for public tenders in other countries?
 The bid has to be handed in the language of the tender
 The required documentation is too complex and they are considerably different from the ones required in your own country.
 Access to publications of foreign public tenders
 Heavy competition by local companies
 Assumption that bids of foreign companies are automatically rejected
 Difficulties of finding suitable partners in the tendering country for a common bid
 Lack of knowledge about the legal framework in other countries
 Systematic technical barriers (e.g. technical admission, evidence of occupational qualification)
- Other obstacles
- 5) Would you make use of a database containing all European tenders below threshold?
 Yes, because
- 6) Did you have the opportunity to visit the ALPPS website (www.alpps-online.com)?
 Yes
 Your impression
- 7) Has the electronic guide about public procurement in the alpine space been useful to you?
http://www.alpps-online.com/Englisch/alpps_en.pdf
 Yes
 No

Suggestions for improvement

- 8) Would you participate in a project like ALPPS again?
 Yes, because
- 9) General comments, suggestions

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