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Abstract:

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITALIZATION OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES IN EUROPE AND REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The main subject-matter of this research is the concept of digitization in the procedures for awarding contracts in public procurement in Europe, with special attention on Republic of North Macedonia. The leading motivation to explore this topic, stems from the actuality of digitization in public services, as well as its impact on the existing modern trends and standards imposed by the needs of public and private sector too.

In this article, we have decided to study this issue, that covers the interest of both the public and private sectors, or *in concreto*, the interest of the contracting authorities on the one hand, and the interest of the business sector on the other. Finally, taking into account the fact that the awarding of contracts for public procurement essentially represents "a way of distributing funds to citizens", the interest of the consumer sector is also indisputable.

Additional value to this research is given by the fact that the analysis of the situations in this field, raises the question of the level of transparency in the procedures, and one way or another, contribute to the reduction of criminality, which typically goes "hand in hand" with public procurement in every national economy.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the legislation and practice in North Macedonia, to study the European legal framework and practice, to observe the advantages and weaknesses of the Macedonian system of awarding public procurement contracts, and to lead them to correlation with EU practices. The main goal is to see what is the Republic of North Macedonia position, in terms of achievements in this field, what are its future priorities, strategies and plans, and finally, whether the legal and practical interventions are exclusively motivated by the EU requirements, values and standards, or actually the steps that North Macedonia takes in this sphere, are in a close and real relationship with the interests of the business sector and the wider consumer sector.

The methodological framework is correlated with the set goal in the study. Namely, for the needs of this research, we used the statistical method, the method of analytical description, the method of induction and deduction, and in the part of the analysis in the EU, the comparative method was fundamental.

Keywords: public procurement, digitalization, e-platform, public and private services, economic operators, contracting authority.