



Business to Business e-Solutions

The Nuances of Adopting PEPPOL via Accreditation vs Connecting via an Accredited Partner

WHITE PAPER

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1. Background

PEPPOL uses the e-Delivery Network to connect different e-Procurement systems by establishing a set of common business processes and technical standards. This provides an interoperable and secure network connecting all Access Points using the same electronic messaging protocol and formats and applying digital signature technologies to secure message content.

Once connected to the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network via a PEPPOL Access Point buyers and sellers can easily establish connections with any trading partner on the PEPPOL network, both public and private.

PEPPOL has become a rapidly expanding approach for many public entities particularly as it provides a standardised approach across many regions and provides standardised security protocols. However, it is worth noting that there is still an element of localised complexity in each country and trading partner that will require a different approach to support.

Of course, like with any electronic solution a supplier who trades with a partner who supports, and wants their suppliers to adopt a PEPPOL approach will be able to approach this in two ways:

- In-house PEPPOL accreditation and management;
- Connecting via an accredited PEPPOL partner.

The White Paper will discuss the two approaches. However, if selecting an approach utilising a third party accredited PEPPOL provider as the Access Point there are a number of questions that are worth taking into consideration.

- Is the provider able to provide support for PEPPOL in the region your organisation operates or for the trading partner you want to trade with?
- Are they able to handle new connections and document types as and when they arise?
- Do they have a traditional EDI background given PEPPOL's relatively recent entry?
- Do they provide a range of services that will compliment and augment your PEPPOL connection which as an organisation is more beneficial as a full solution provider?

2. PEPPOL Basics

To understand the approach your organisation takes it is best to start with the basics. How does PEPPOL work?

Exchanging documents within the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network is based on the 'four-corner' approach. The sender and receiver connect to an Access Point who are accredited by PEPPOL.

As part of the connectivity and transmission process all PEPPOL participating organisations publish their receipt capabilities (delivery addresses, business processes and document types supported, etc.) which is called Service Metadata Publisher (SMP). An Access Point cannot exist without publishing to an SMP.

The SMP database is checked by the Access Point when a document is initiated to ensure the trading partner is capable of receiving the document and the metadata is correct.

To do this, PEPPOL maintains a centralised database called Service Metadata Locator (SML). The SML defines which SMP to use to find out the delivery details of any other PEPPOL participant in order to deliver electronic messages from a sender to the correct receiver. This ensures all Access Points are aware of one another and what their respective capabilities are and is validated as part of the Access Point connection routine.

PEPPOL has also developed Business Interoperability Specifications (BIS) which are designed to standardise electronic document exchange (EDI) messages and validation which the Access Point applies when connecting and transmitting documents through the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network. Access Point report any transgressions if they occur to PEPPOL.

All documents transmitted into the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network use Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) technologies. The public, private key infrastructure guarantees security and access to the PEPPOL network.

PEPPOL at the time of writing this White Paper currently supports: product catalogues, purchase orders, purchase order confirmation, dispatch advice (ASN), and invoices

3. Organisational Change and Considerations

Organisation change is an important aspect of a PEPPOL implementation. Like any change organisational change needs to occur at the same time technologies change.

The amount of change of course will depend on the approach your organisation will take. If you have outsourced the PEPPOL connection to a third party perhaps the change will be less. Whereas, if your organisation has adopted the approach to handle PEPPOL internally this will bring greater change.

These decisions, out-source or to manage internally, will of course be dictated by skill availability, resource availability, ROI and future needs of your organisation.

3.1 Skill Availability:

Does your organisation have the internal skills within the technology teams to understand, implement and manage a PEPPOL solution and Access Point?

The accreditation process will need resources from infrastructure, systems, development and the business to manage PEPPOL accreditation. Are they suitable skilled and ultimately available?

3.2 Resource Availability:

Does your organisation have the resources available to embark on the project. To both manage the technical implementation and the change process. Remember, other functions within the business will be affected by a change for the trading partners your organisation connects to via PEPPOL.

Any approach, internal or out-sourced needs to be resourced appropriately. Are these resources available internally or do you need to hire resources or look at your ERP provider or consultants, for example.

Each implementation via PEPPOL will also take time so resources will need to be available for each implementation which will occur over time so resources will need to be available each time.

3.3 ROI:

Of course, a key decision-making factor with any change process is the return on investment. Is the change going to deliver the desired or targeted results?

Embarking on any electronic document exchange approach has to have a net gain within the ethos and change decision process of your organisation. If the investment to be an Access Point doesn't warrant the return, then by definition an out-sourced approach is the next option. If an outsourced approach also doesn't provide a return on investment, then the rationale to trade via PEPPOL may not exist?

Obviously, there are other lower cost solutions where your PEPPOL trading partners needs can be met. For example, Web EDI solutions that can support PEPPOL.

3.4 Future Needs:

After understanding if your organisation has the skills, or not, has availability of resources and has determined the best ROI approach the change process needs to look at how leveraging a PEPPOL connection can help the business grow in the future, both technically and financially.

4. Outsourcing V's Inhouse PEPPOL Solutions

Your organisation can approach PEPPOL in two ways, outsource the requirements to an accredited PEPPOL Access Point third party or manage the connectivity and accreditation process internally with your environment and with your ERP.

At this stage it has been assumed that moving documents electronically provides better business practices than handling documents manually. There's greater control, auditability, and resources can be utilised for more important things within the organisation.

The discussion focuses at this point on the different approaches to help determine the best outcome as each approach has pros and cons and will be driven, in part, by volume.

4.1 In-house:

An in-house approach means all the accreditation will be handled by internal staff or consultants who manage middleware and ERP systems unless your organisation has all the required skills.

The initial PEPPOL implementation and accreditation may take months so the organisation needs to be prepared to play the long game. PEPPOL also requires a membership fee and on-going yearly fees over and above the investment you will make as part of the implementation.

Likewise, each implementation will require further effort as they may vary from one trading partner to another.

Typically, out sourcing has on-going costs which may be in the form of subscription or transaction charges. These typically are volume related so increases and decreases in document volumes will affect what your organisation will pay. Large volumes may see the investment to do the work internally as a viable option.

Support will also need to be provided internally on an ongoing basis. Business users will require support and if there are technical changes over time for PEPPOL these too will need to be supported.

Of course, as an organisation you may have already implemented a number of EDI connections so there may be a defined approach in place already and this may impact the approach you take. Why manage the process internally if you already have an EDI provider and particularly if they're PEPPOL accredited?

4.2 Outsourcing:

Outsourcing means that most of the PEPPOL technical requirements will no longer need considering. Given the out-source provider has PEPPOL accreditation and is an Access Point.

Typically, with this approach only the import and export of EDI files needs to be considered. If your organisation already has EDI setup then this is an easier step and where your EDI partner can handle PEPPOL it makes things even easier.

Of course, costs are typically born based on transactions, or variation of, so costs will accrue over a period of time. If your organisation simply views an electronic transaction as a cheaper way to trade than manually then a

transactional approach, given its more cost effective than the manual approach, is relatively straight forward.

Support and future PEPPOL changes should also be handled by the outsourcing provider which means they will affect your organisation less, if at all.

Your organisation's resources will of course still need to be involved with each trading partner implementation via PEPPOL to manage testing but outsourcing will mean it is not too different to any standard EDI implementation.

4.3 Web EDI:

Where the volumes of documents you trade with trading partners that require you to support PEPPOL may not necessitate investment internally or outsourcing the process in a similar way as EDI.

Many out-source providers will be able to provide a Web EDI tool which mean it is still manual for your organisation, which means double keying. However, it means your organisation can comply and can handle PEPPOL based trading partners.

5. B2BE's Access Point

B2BE as an Access Point provides your organisation with immediate access to the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network and all the trading partners who exist on the network.

If your organisation trades with public bodies participating on the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network, which is growing beyond Europe's traditional borders, then you can spend time and money becoming accredited or let B2BE handle the integration.

This means you only need to focus on delivering documents in and out of your ERP or finance systems and B2BE will handle the PEPPOL connectivity and technical requirements. In fact, B2BE has a great deal of experience with many systems so even managing the integration with your ERP isn't too difficult.

You could take PEPPOL as an out of the box stand-alone solution or combine it with an EDI, or any other solution you already have in place with B2BE.

6. Advantages

6.1 Security:

B2BE's PEPPOL Access Point offers unparalleled levels of security. B2BE has been delivering EDI solutions for over 20+ years and appreciate that we're trusted with our client's data. We are not only experienced in delivering secure connectivity requirements as part of B2BE's EDI solution offering, B2BE ensures this process is professionally recognised by with our ISO 27001 certification.

As an Access Point, this also means the ongoing reporting and PEPPOL standards are being met by B2BE.

B2BE also runs data centres, and back-ups, in a number of locations across the globe and complies, more recently, with privacy and GDPR requirements so your organisation's data is safe in our hands and when we connect to PEPPOL's e-Delivery Network.

6.2 Visibility:

B2BE offer client's a visibility tool to enable monitoring of documents through the B2BE EDI network and into the PEPPOL e-Delivery Network.

All documents, logs and actions are immediately available and your organisation can also setup automated notifications to monitor the exchange of EDI and PEPPOL based documents.

If your organisation wants an environment that is branded and allows access for your trading partners and access to a range of other B2BE tools and products take a look at the B2BE's Web Portal.

6.3 Value Add and Experience:

B2BE has many years of document exchange using any number of protocols and formats. The PEPPOL solution sits nicely alongside the current document management and EDI solutions.

PEPPOL connectivity can be coupled with standard EDI solutions, document management solutions, both for receipt and transmission of documents as well as a range of financial, procurement and workflow solutions.

Streamline your business while gaining instant access to a PEPPOL Access Point when you select B2BE as your partner.

7. Contact Us

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