

## AppaltiPOP: Accountability for Italy's public contracts



BLOG

BY ALEX MACBETH / 8 DEC 2020

AppaltiPOP



**71.159**

Appalti monitorati



**42%**

Appalti con red  
flag



**37**

Enti pubblici  
monitorati

*In October 2020, Italian civil society organization [onData](https://ondata.it) (<https://ondata.it>) launched [AppaltiPOP](https://www.appaltipop.it/it) (<https://www.appaltipop.it/it>), a platform for citizens and stakeholders to monitor public procurement processes. The project makes public sector data more accessible and increases transparency in the challenging public procurement sector in Italy. Here, we share how they did it.*

AppaltiPOP lists more than 70,000 tenders by 37 public administrations in Italy from 2019 alone. onData's team of data specialists and technicians source the data from Italy's state anti-corruption watchdog, ANAC, before republishing it as reusable open data in the [Open Contracting Data Standard](http://standard.open-contracting.org) format (<http://standard.open-contracting.org>). Launched this October, the project is a welcome addition to making public procurement procedures more open and transparent.

Italy spends more than \$200 billion annually on public procurement (<https://www.open-contracting.org/what-is-open-contracting/global-procurement-spend/>), which accounts for approximately 10% of GDP. Yet the influence of nefarious practices and forces continues to plight civil society activists' efforts to ensure more accountability of the country's public contracts.

Between 2016 and 2019, the Italian Anti-Corruption Authority ([ANAC](http://www.anticorruzione.it/portal/public/classic/) (<http://www.anticorruzione.it/portal/public/classic/>)) identified 152 cases of corruption in public procurement in Italy (<http://www.anticorruzione.it/portal/rest/jcr/repository/collaboration/Digital%20Assets/anacdocs/Comunicazione/News/2019/RELAZIONE%20+%20TABELLE.pdf>). 74% of those were linked to irregularities in how tenders were awarded for public works. More than 40 public officials were arrested. Besides tenders for public construction works, the most affected sectors were health and waste management.

onData sources the data for AppaltiPOP from public administrations, often via ANAC. Italian public administrations are obliged by a 2012 law (<https://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2012-11-13&atto.codiceRedazionale=012G0213&atto.articolo.numero=0&qId=5d26ea16-0778-419a-992d-ab878855ba12&tabID=0.7242516806691497&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto>) to release all annual data on public procurement as XML files to the anti-corruption authority by January 31st of the subsequent year. AppaltiPOP's team then helps to identify corruption risks, or red flags, and aims to send this data back to ANAC to support their investigations.

A total of 42% of all tenders in AppaltiPOP have raised a flag. A tender will be 'red flagged' if it displays one of five criteria: a low number of bidders to the tender, a single bidder, or a low percentage of bids, can ring alarm bells; similarly, if a bidder wins a first-time tender or if there is limited or no information about a supplier, a red flag will be raised. A red flag doesn't mean there has to be corruption, but they help identify processes that require further investigation.

## Cerca appalti

### Campo libero di ricerca



Ricerca per "": 10000+ risultati.

### Ricerca avanzata



#### Regione

#### Pubblica amministrazione

#### Importo (€)

#### Numero di red flag

0,00 ● | 2,09G+ ● 0 ● | 5 ●

#### Modalità

#### A partire da...

#### ... fino a...

Cerca



“The public debate on red flags is wide and rich,” says onData’s director, Andrea Borruso. “We have identified our flags on the basis of two factors: recommendations made by researchers and publications, and the availability of data.” One of the largest causes of red flags has been the failure of public procurement authorities to provide sufficient information about suppliers, adds onData’s Vincenzo Patruno.

One of AppaltiPOP’s benefits is that the platform not only lists the data, it transforms it into CSV and into the Open Contracting Data Standard, the global best practice schema for publishing procurement data. This means the data can be compared with data from other countries and linked up across different systems. onData uses an Extract, Form, Load (ETL) technique, which transforms data from multiple sources into one standardized final output. AppaltiPOP then publishes the data in popular spreadsheet formats. “The user interface is designed for users without data and technical skills,” says Andrea Nelson Mauro, a project manager with onData.

AppaltiPOP is only a first version of the tool but it is already used by anti-corruption organizations and constitutional watchdogs like [Transparency International Italia](https://www.transparency.it/) and [Parliament Watch Italy](http://parliamentwatch.it/), both partners on the project.

The project was called AppaltiPOP (‘Procurement Pop’) precisely because it was designed to make complex data easy to understand. The user-friendly interface helps citizens track and engage with public procurement information. AppaltiPOP allows users to search by region in a country where many public procurement processes are devolved, with regional administrations playing a key role.

Collecting data from local administrations is a complex and often frustrating process, especially because of the quality of the data. “Bad quality, poor information, missing fields and so on are the ingredients of the mess we dealt with,” says onData’s Borruso. “If on the one hand public administrations have a mandatory task to deliver data about public contracts, we should highlight that they should also do more in terms of quality.”

Unsurprisingly perhaps, Italy’s anti-corruption authority ANAC singles out municipalities as the political authorities with the highest identified rate of corruption in public procurement. Sicily is the worst affected region, yet cases, and arrests, have been made nationwide.

onData is part of a growing group of constitutional watchdogs in Italy, fuelled by the challenge of monitoring an evermore complex procurement landscape. A similar project to AppaltiPOP launched by Openpolis, an Italian foundation advocating for more open data, monitors public procurement contracts related to COVID-19. That project, [Bandi Covid](https://bandicovid.openpolis.it/login), has reviewed contracts worth a combined €14 billion.

The pandemic has thrown a plethora of new suppliers, tenders and contracts into the public procurement arena, which makes it harder for open data advocates to track and monitor the field. Tools like AppaltiPOP help citizens and civil society groups to monitor how and with whom public administrations spend taxpayer money.

[OPEN DATA \(HTTPS://WWW.OPEN-CONTRACTING.ORG/TAG/OPEN-DATA/\)](https://www.open-contracting.org/tag/open-data/)

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