



AUTORITÀ
NAZIONALE
ANTICORRUZIONE

2024 YEARLY REPORT

**Presentation by President
Giuseppe Busià**

**Italian Chamber of Deputies
Rome, 20 May 2025**

Authorities, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies for the warm welcome, along with all the attendees.

"Heal from corruption": with this authoritative command, found in a short, little-quoted text in recent weeks, Pope Francis was aiming to shake our consciences and urge us to take a clear stance, addressing, as always, believers and non-believers.

He explained that healing from corruption means rejecting the culture that feeds corruption. The corrupted are never solitary beings; in order to exist, they need a system that supports and legitimises them. Moreover, *"while, for sin, there is redemption,"* wrote Francis, *"for corruption, there is not"*.

To avoid contracting this disease, which spreads insidiously from individuals to society as a whole, we need to work on prevention, as ANAC continued to do in 2024, always striving to combine anti-corruption with efficiency and good administration. Such prevention does not aim to restrain but instead focuses on the speed and effectiveness of public action, in the firm belief that preventing corruption is not only a tool to avoid criminal infiltration (along with the huge damage caused by the squandering of public money) but provides administrations a very powerful organisational advantage in terms of efficiency; this is an essential requirement for the development of the country and the welfare of the community.

However, this strategy would fail if it were down to the solitary action of just one or a few authorities. We need everyone – public institutions and private companies, associations and individual citizens – to come together and share a common commitment to safeguarding integrity, the essential asset on which the credibility of our democracy rests.

SUPRANATIONAL DIMENSION

Global context and Europe's strategic role

Corruption is perhaps the crime that has evolved most as a result of global dynamics, multiplying the subjects involved and the formal methods and tactics applied, crossing national borders and exploiting every technological resource, starting with cryptocurrencies.

In this increasing intermingling of roles, corruptive profiteering has managed to creep into the very formulation of the rules. Such infiltration can even go so far as extreme cases of "State capture", whereby corruption becomes so systemic that private interests are able to determine public decision-making processes to their own advantage. This situation becomes even riskier at a time when some economic giants have acquired dimensions even larger than those of many States and base their power on technologies that are in themselves capable of influencing public opinion.

In this sea of dangers, the European Union must, more than ever, act as a beacon, leading the way; it must no longer be merely an area of economic cooperation but, increasingly, a place for rights to be protected and for democracy to be safeguarded.

It is therefore crucial for the Anti-Corruption Directive to be approved expeditiously, in the hope that this will preserve the Commission's design and thus become a powerful tool for relaunching Europe as the ideal destination for those wanting to invest in healthy and sustainable growth.

Its strategic importance is not diminished, but rather increased – in competitive terms – by some concerning steps backward by the new US administration; we hope this regression will be temporary, but nonetheless it gives the European Union a window of opportunity to gain a global leadership role, which is essential for fostering development and attracting investments.

In this context, it is clear that our anti-corruption legislation is far more than an Italian oddity, almost a form of outdated provincialism, as it has sometimes been portrayed; instead, it is the expression of a shared effort at European and international level, as well as a fundamental building block on which to anchor economic progress and social development.

It is a precious stronghold from which we cannot and must not retreat.

ANAC's international activity

In full awareness of this, the Authority has continued to strengthen its commitment at international level, culminating, in 2024, with its election to the Presidency of the *European Network for Public Ethics* (ENPE) and the *Network for Integrity*, as well as with the Vice-Presidency of the *International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities* (IAACA), adding to the Presidency of the *Network of European Integrity and Whistleblowing Authorities* (NEIWA), held since 2023.

This is an extraordinary and unique global achievement, of which we are particularly proud, not just for us but for our country, as it is a significant recognition of a path made up of commitment, work and constant dialogue, aimed at strengthening our authority and role before our international partners.

Together with the Portuguese IMPIC (*Instituto dos Mercados Públicos, do Imobiliário e da Construção*), we founded the *Public Procurement Network* (PPN), of which we are co-coordinators, to foster sharing of knowledge and good practices in the field of public contracts, developing the Italian model based on the integration of corruption prevention and procurement oversight.

We also confirmed our role as the referent for numerous initiatives within the Council of Europe, particularly in the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the European Union, the OECD and the

G20, concretely demonstrating that it is essential, even more so these days, to work in multilateral organisations. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the ILLA, for the excellent cooperation implemented in legal diplomacy activities, also carried out in several Latin American countries.

As part of our crucial cooperation and capacity building experiences, we operate in complex contexts and critical areas of the planet. In addition to the recently launched twinning with the *Bosnian Anti-Corruption Agency*, our work continues, under a European mandate, alongside the *Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission*; this has become even more significant now in view of the management of international aid for reconstruction, which will hopefully arrive soon, along with peace and normality.

The vivid accounts of our colleagues at the aforementioned Authority are giving us an insight into the difficulties and suffering they are having to endure every day, for which we express our profound sympathy. We also hope to resume our collaboration with our colleagues from the Ukrainian Authority, begun before the tragic Russian invasion, so that we can offer our assistance in the country's reconstruction process. This is a commitment to which we were pleased to have made a small contribution through our collaborative supervision in organising the *Ukraine Recovery Conference*, which will this year be held in Rome next July.

CORRUPTION PREVENTION

Conflict of interests, ineligibility, *pantouflage*: need for harmonious reform

Administrations must be and must show themselves to be impartial. This is required by our Constitution, as well as by the subsequent anti-corruption legislation. However, all too many cases of conflicts of interests – small and large – continue to appear before us, all capable of undermining the credibility of institutions.

In response to our early warning of the gaps in protection that would be left by the repeal of the offence of abuse of office, we were informed that the elimination of the criminal sanction would be offset by the enhancement of administrative safeguards.

Unfortunately, not only has such offset not occurred, but, following the reduction of protection in conflict of interest brought about by the Public Contracts Code, we have seen a gradual weakening of the administrative guarantees imposed to safeguard the independence and correctness of public action.

With regard to ineligibility, the recent repeal of Article 7(2) of Legislative Decree 39 of 2013 not only fails to resolve the critical issues we highlighted after the Constitutional Court's ruling of 5 March 2024, but it also opens a gap in protection for administrative functions at local level (those closest to citizens) with clear disparity of treatment compared to functions performed at higher territorial levels.

The rules on incompatibilities after holding office (*pantouflage* prohibition), as we have pointed out, had long been in need of adjustment, not least to ensure they are fully applicable to larger groups.

Law no. 69 of 9 May last, converting Decree Law no. 25/2025 (so-called PA Decree), rather than addressing these critical aspects,

reduced the period of time between offices in potential conflict from three years to one year, identically for all public administration bodies. It failed to consider the extreme diversification of these roles and did not cover all individuals who are not part of these bodies, first and foremost employees, to whom the old rules will continue to apply; it therefore merely succeeded in creating some interpretative confusion as to the actual scope of application of the new rule.

Finally, the PA Decree itself, by amending Article 12 of Legislative Decree no. 39/2013, opened a loophole concerning delicate hypotheses of conflict of interest, also leading to legal inconsistencies between the different circumstances of incompatibility. This calls into question the key principle of separation between political activity and management activity, between controller and controlled, when it allows holders of certain political offices to fulfil, simultaneously, managerial positions within the entities over which they exercise their mandate.

Rules on conflicts of interest, ineligibility and incompatibility, by their very nature, must avoid partial and disorganised interventions, instead requiring systematic reflection and harmonious redefinition; for this reason, we have already made some specific proposals in this regard.

Otherwise, there is a risk of engendering a serious loss of trust in politics and in institutions, which our democracy cannot allow to happen.

An alarm signal was perceived when Italy was downgraded in *Transparency International's* Corruption Perceptions Index, losing two points and as many as ten positions in 2024, for the first time after thirteen years of positive or stable results. This major step backwards should not be underestimated as it is based on perception and not on the real facts, but it should instead be given serious consideration, constituting evidence of a gradual loss of public trust, which is so precious at this delicate historical moment.

Absence of organic rules on lobbying

A serious shortcoming, repeatedly highlighted by international organisations, is the absence of organic rules on lobbying, which have become more urgent these days after the restriction of the offence of trafficking in illegal influences and at a time when lobbying tools are becoming more and more pervasive.

For this reason, it is necessary a regulation that, while avoiding taking an unnecessarily criminalising approach, as well as defining clear limits and prohibitions on any benefits obtained – direct or indirect payback for public decisions –, guarantees the full transparency of lobbyists' activities, creating open digital channels through which even the least structured lobbies can submit their proposals. It will, of course, then be up to the public decision-maker to choose between the different options, while being held accountable for them transparently before citizens.

This would also benefit both lobbyists, whose role would be recognised, and the institutional decision-makers themselves, whether politicians or executives, who, in order to make informed decisions, need a transparent dialogue with civil society, in all its aspects.

Whistleblowing: an expanding institution

Apathy is the worst enemy of freedom: those who fought to defend it have taught us that democracy gradually becomes lost in indifference, when the courage to speak up is overcome by the comfort of silence.

This is also why it is important to protect whistleblowers: those who are witness in the workplace offences of varying severity and do not shy away, but instead take action, report, speak up, even at the cost of retaliation, even at the cost of their careers. Their courage is an expression of a high and noble form of democratic participation and care for the common good.

They are not a danger, therefore, but a valuable aid for the organisations in which they work.

After around two years since the new decree, the numbers show that the institute of whistleblowing is expanding, also thanks to the awareness-raising activities carried out by many civil society organisations, with whom we cooperate and to whom we offer our thanks.

In 2024, 1,213 external reports were received by ANAC for allegedly illegal behaviour. Of these, 285 were deemed prosecutable: these figures reveal the thorough verification activity carried out by the Authority.

Whistleblowing, already applied in the public sector, is growing in its strategic significance also in the private sector, helping to improve the environment and the quality of relationships, while overcoming those insane connivances that pollute workplaces and distract from the pursuit of social goals and long-term growth; this can also help to reduce the risk of reputational damage, which is so significant in the current period of time.

Support to Officers Responsible for the Prevention of Corruption and Transparency (RPCTs) and to administrations

The Officers Responsible for the Prevention of Corruption and Transparency (RPCTs), present in all public bodies and entities, are an essential cog in the prevention system, fundamental guardians of legality, often called upon to operate in difficult situations and without adequate support. To protect them, we have long been calling for more meaningful tools of intervention, especially in cases where they find themselves exposed to resistance or outright hostility, with a direct threat to their independence.

In order to simplify the planning of prevention measures, the Authority – together with the Ministries of the Interior, Public Administration and the National Association of Italian Municipalities, to whom we are

grateful for their fruitful cooperation – has created a digital platform for assistance in preparing the *"Corruption Risks and Transparency"* Section of the Integrated Activity and Organisation Plan.

In taking a gradual coaching approach, we decided to start with the Municipalities, the first face of the administration and the outposts of innovation capacity, and with Southern Italy, whose impetus is crucial for the relaunch of the country. This project, currently aimed at the small Municipalities of five southern Regions, will gradually be extended to the rest of the country and to larger entities.

To offer further assistance, we have also intensified our advisory activities: 176 opinions have been provided on corruption prevention and transparency. In terms of supervision, the fact that 257 of the 642 files opened as a result of reports, were closed in the pre-investigation phase, after liaising with the administrations, demonstrates the effectiveness of the preventive and dialogue-based approach favoured by the Authority.

ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSPARENCY

The Single Transparency Platform and its development

"When the citizen is passive, it is democracy that is sick," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville. This is also why we must maximise transparency, thus stimulating an active and monitoring community, a precondition for a lively and participatory institutional environment.

With this in mind, we are working on the Single Transparency Platform, a place for gaining unified access to the data and documents of public administrations, to simplify and increase the usability of the PA's information assets.

In creating the Platform, we are integrating multiple solutions. In circumstances where information has already been entered in

databases, there is no need to burden the authorities with new requests; we merely need to connect to the existing tools, following the logic used by the *Italiae Project* – promoted by the Department for Regional Affairs together with representatives of the different local levels and civil society organisations – whose results we hope to integrate with our Platform.

Where, on the other hand, there are no databases already in place, we aim to standardise and simplify the publication activities for entities, enabling them to upload data directly onto our Platform, thus further reducing their burden.

Finally, thanks to the invaluable support offered by the National Research Council, to which we are grateful, we are experimenting with modern web scraping techniques, meaning that data can be collected automatically from the sites of origin.

All this can assist in offering more information to citizens and administrations themselves, at a lower cost.

Simpler transparency for greater efficiency

Twelve years on from Legislative Decree no. 33 of 2013, a leap forward is needed to respond to the broad and diverse demand for transparency emerging from increasingly discerning social bodies and citizens, who are no longer only interested in knowing data, but also in reprocessing them independently to play a more active part in public policy decisions. This actually benefits the administrations themselves, which are often unaware of all activities taking place internally and can therefore identify incentives for creating fruitful synergies with other players, increasing operational efficiency.

The local entities have already demonstrated that they share these tenets. We hope that the Working Group set up within the Civil Service Department will also produce results in this regard.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Digitalisation

Public procurement is the principal tool for realising investments, the ideal meeting place between the public and private sectors, a driver of economic growth for the country and, above all, a means of meeting the needs of citizens. Citizens are, in fact, its primary financiers – indirectly through the payment of taxes and duties – and they must therefore be its ultimate recipients: each mistake, shortcoming or fraud perpetrated causes the worst damages to them.

In this respect, 2024 was above all the year of digitalisation, as it became mandatory to complete all procurement procedures using platforms interconnected to the ANAC database (BDNCP), which has also taken over the role once entrusted to the Official Journal, increasing more than tenfold the number of submissions and outcomes of the published procedures. The aim is to make these steps simpler, faster and more transparent and competitive.

Despite the physiological difficulties encountered in adapting to the change, the administrations have demonstrated that they are receptive and attentive to the digital revolution.

However, there is still a long way to go: many contracting authorities are still not digitalised. Some platforms still only provide web pages for uploading data and still lack effective digitalisation of the process which eases the work of those involved. Not all certifying bodies submit data promptly.

ANAC is working hard to resolve these critical issues, in close cooperation with the Agency for Digital Italy (AgID), the Department for Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Guidance Committee (*Cabina di regia*), to which we express our gratitude for their precious cooperation.

Market trends and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan deadline is looming. However, despite the acceleration in recent months, there is concern about the expenditure trend, which in some areas is still below 30% of the allocated resources, according to figures released by the Court of Auditors last March.

It will in any case be crucial to establish a link between the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and other European and national funding, so that the most strategic projects can continue, particularly in sectors where there are the greatest delays.

We must also prepare for an inevitable reduction in the launch of new procedures. As early as in 2024, out of a total amount of over 270 billion, a decline has been witnessed in the public procurement market compared to the previous year, with a more pronounced drop in works, recording a 38.9% reduction.

In this context, transparency and competition will become increasingly necessary to ensure that public resources are used more efficiently and the best companies are not penalised. The focus must initially be on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often bear the costs of badly structured tendering procedures.

Risks linked to too many direct contract awards

Unfortunately, there continue to be too many direct contract awards; in 2024, these accounted, numerically, for 98% of the total procurement of services and supplies.

The growing concentration of non-competitive contract awards between €135,000 and €140,000 is of particular concern as the latter figure is close to the threshold, which has more than trebled since 2021 when its value was €75,000.

Against this backdrop, there are many cases of manipulated splitting of contracts, aimed at keeping the amounts below the legal thresholds and often circumventing the qualification obligation of contracting authorities.

Opportunistic behaviour has proliferated, often concealing unreasonable waste and unfortunately, in some cases, even criminal and mafia infiltration, as noted by some recent news reports.

In some particular contexts, honest administrators find themselves more exposed to undue pressure, no longer being able to resist the need to open at least some sort of competitive tender with other economic operators, under €140,000.

It should be emphasised once again that in public contracts it is not sufficient to act quickly, but also to do things well, investing in planning, developing design and pursuing the best quality in terms of implementation. This is the only way to achieve the result principle, which meets the needs of citizens, avoids waste and achieves actual time savings. Indeed, companies selected in the absence of competitive tender procedures are often not the quickest workers and, above all, do not guarantee the highest quality.

Corrective Decree: real improvements and missed opportunities

The Corrective Decree of the Public Contracts Code (Legislative Decree no. 209/2024), adopted after a process in which ANAC participated in a fruitful institutional dialogue by submitting reports and proposals, has been in force since 31 December 2024. Some of ANAC's proposals were accepted, making a significant contribution to overcoming the initial doubts, misalignments and gaps, as well as adding a further impetus to digitalisation; unfortunately, others were not.

The obligation has not been introduced for companies to declare the beneficial owner, while, conversely, there is a clear need for the public contractor to know who it is dealing with, behind the corporate

shields. This not only reduces the risk of dangerous infiltration but also prevents combined bids or other serious threats to competition. No action has been taken on the thresholds for increasing transparency and competitiveness, as well as for re-establishing preventive checks on in-house assignments, which would have been useful for avoiding market distortions and slowdowns resulting from potential disputes.

The role of the Technical Advisory Boards, despite being scaled down by the Corrective Decree, is actually increasingly central to settling disputes and doubts that arise during the execution of works. On the other hand, adequate transparency measures are lacking; instead, appropriate publicity should be given – even through links to ANAC databases – to the composition and remuneration of the Boards, as well as to the decisions taken by them, given the significant economic impact they have on public budgets, amongst other things.

The phenomenon of fake guarantees, estimated to be worth several million Euros, is concerning. While the Corrective Decree has resolved some of the critical issues, the online verification system now needs to be implemented promptly. The opportunities for forgery are reduced if, similarly to the system adopted by ANAC for the Works Completion Certificates (CEs), it is the guarantors themselves who upload the guarantee onto special databases, linked to the virtual dossier of economic operators (FVOE).

Construction digital management methods and tools

Digitalisation should not only cover the award procedures, but also the design of the works.

The use of digital modelling – now compulsory for works above €2 million – is a fundamental step, not only to make the design more complete and consistent and avoid costly variants, but also to ensure the works are managed more efficiently throughout their entire life cycle.

Unfortunately, only a few contracting authorities are truly ready for such a major change. We are therefore striving to ensure that those who have the expertise can put it to good use by assisting others, creating positive partnerships for all concerned.

We hope that this experience can also build the impetus for creating a unitary project database, a valuable asset to be pooled and a tool for developing existing infrastructures and a catalogue of good practices to be drawn upon when planning future works.

Work safety and protection of rights

Such innovative management tools, applied to digital worksites, can be a key resource for avoiding dangerous criminal infiltration, improving management efficiency and, above all, increasing worker safety.

In this scenario, public contracts must be a model and a laboratory of good practices, also to be transferred to the private world.

It is unacceptable for there to be still too many workplace accidents and deaths. Even if they are partly the result of regulatory changes and an increased number of inspections, the figures from our Companies Register are of concern: 1,448 entries for health and safety violations in 2024, an increase of 43% compared to 2023 and 87% on 2022.

In this context, the greatest risks arise in the field of subcontracting, especially when it is carried out in subcontracting chains. The use of this institution, when not justified by substantive reasons connected to the specific services to be performed, often reveals incorrect planning on the part of the contracting authority in terms of the amount of the tender or its division into lots.

This comes with negative repercussions: on the contracting authority itself, which is left with lower quality services; on subcontractors,

particularly SMEs, which see their profit margins eroded; and, above all, on workers, who are all too often the weak link in the chain.

In addition to the necessary strengthening of guarantees and joint and several liability throughout the subcontracting chain, the checks on all entities involved must be made immediate, exploiting the advantages of digitalisation. We have offered to implement the so-called “points licence” system, linking it to our databases, so as to avoid costly duplication and to make this tool more effective and comprehensive.

It is also absolutely essential to apply contractual guarantees correctly in the different sectors, providing – as established by the Code – the same protections for all workers involved and avoiding mechanisms aimed at seeking savings by reducing rights and protections.

With the National Council for Economics and Labour and with the major Trade Unions – which we would like to thank, along with the Employers’ Organisations, for their constant and constructive dialogue – we are working to identify effective solutions, in the firm belief that public contracts must be a safe place for regulated and protected work.

Social procurement and sustainability

Public contracts are a fundamental tool not only for offering goods and services or for carrying out works, but also for creating innovation and generating positive changes in society.

Sustainable procurement, under its threefold environmental, social and ethical profile, can be a strategic lever of inclusive and future-oriented development. Economic costs should be measured from a broader perspective, encompassing the entire life cycle of the product or service acquired or work implemented, as well as its impact on its particular context.

In this sense, Article 9 of the Constitution, as recently supplemented,

requires us to protect the environment and ecosystems also in the interest of future generations. It is precisely these criteria of sustainability and resilience that will drive the proposed revision of the procurement framework to be presented by the European Commission in 2026: moving in this direction now can offer us significant competitive advantages.

Challenge of inclusion and protection of beauty

Unfortunately, Italy is exploiting these opportunities less than it could be; for example, it is not doing enough to get women, young people, the disadvantaged and prisoners into work.

Despite the National Recovery and Resilience Plan's drive to promote gender and generational equality, the amount of procedures in which specific clauses in this respect have been included have only increased by less than 2%. The application of these criteria is limited not only by the numerous exceptions that arise, but also by the lack of measures to encourage the evolution of corporate culture.

Finally, sustainability today is enriched by a new frontier: that of beauty, with the aim of making beauty inclusive and making it a tool for urban regeneration and social progress. Europe is already active on this front, and Italy – custodian of a heritage spanning centuries – cannot miss out on this opportunity to attract investments and to grow.

Here too, the public-private partnership (PPP) is to be encouraged, as it offers administrations a real opportunity to multiply their capacities for implementation and innovation, provided that they pay due attention to the correct division of risk, avoiding it being offloaded almost entirely onto the public sector, as we have seen all too often.

The phenomenon of the so-called “token doctors” and critical aspects of the health sector

Public contracts are therefore essential for protecting rights and expanding them. We see this, for example, in the right to health, the only one expressly defined as “fundamental” by the Constitution. In an essential sector such as health, we have worked to help administrations manage contracts more efficiently and avoid waste.

As emerges from the *2nd ANAC Report* on the phenomenon of the so-called “token” doctors or nurses, the trend towards outsourcing of health personnel is continuing.

In anticipation of verifying the effects of the regulations adopted with the Ministerial Decree of 17 June 2024, which ANAC assisted in drafting – and we express our thanks to the Ministry of Health for this – there is a need for greater development of internal professionals, to be selected through meritocratic competitive procedures capable of attracting our best young people.

Likewise, the practice of purchasing machinery at a discounted price, with a hidden *quid pro quo* linked to very expensive maintenance services, must be curbed, especially in the healthcare sector. This comes with the additional risk of the administration finding itself dependent on a single supplier for a long period of time, resulting in a serious breach of the principle of competition.

Hydrogeological instability and emergencies

Public contracts are also a valuable tool for making the country safe so as to prevent disasters that affect the lives of citizens, which we witness all too often due to negligence in routine maintenance.

ISPRA (Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) data tell us that almost 94% of Italian Municipalities are at risk of hydrogeological instability or are subject to coastal erosion. Both a

fact-finding investigation by ANAC and a Report to the Government and Parliament, containing some operational proposals, deal with this issue.

The framework law on *post*-disaster reconstruction (no. 40 of 18 March 2025), which finally introduces a homogeneous and stable model for all reconstruction processes, is an important step forward, and we would like to express our gratitude to the Parliamentary Committees for the attention paid to our suggestions. However, a change of mentality is also needed in this regard, to make use of ordinary rules whenever possible, limiting the use of any derogations to cases of actual necessity. In any case, we must ensure that any extraordinary intervention is always also an opportunity to leave the necessary expertise permanently in the affected area.

Professionalisation and qualification

Investment is also required with regard to the professionalism of public purchasers in order to ensure that they are able to use the available instruments in a strategic, systemic and future-oriented manner, fearlessly exercising the discretion left to them by law.

It is therefore crucial to continue the qualification process of contracting authorities and central purchasing bodies, with the aim not only of streamlining their number – a result that has been broadly achieved – but above all of making them more efficient and capable of offering purchasing services to less structured entities. Qualification thus assists in creating networks, establishing partnerships, generating economies of scale and promoting good management. It is a model of public administration reform which should also be exported to other areas.

Purchasing drugs is different from buying a computer service or building a school. Specialisation must therefore be increasingly encouraged; this is just what we intend to do starting with the Table of Aggregators that is to be set up in the coming weeks.

But this is not all. Reforms designed to meet qualification requirements can be a stimulus for overall process efficiency. This is demonstrated by the case of the Ministry of Education and Merit – to which we are grateful for the collaborative spirit it has shown – which has drawn impetus precisely from the need to qualify contracting authorities to develop its regional networks.

An increasingly European procurement market

In some areas, our contracting authorities are too small to compete with global economic players. In this regard and not only from a cost-saving perspective, European procurement must be developed and expanded, especially in terms of strategic supplies, such as energy.

From this perspective, we were among the first to call for the creation of a *European Public Procurement Database*, a precondition for establishing a true single procurement market. We are currently in the process of fully integrating our databases with the *European Public Procurement Data Space*, as well as of ensuring that the benefits of the *European Digital Wallet* can also be extended to legal persons, by linking our virtual dossier of economic operators (FVOE) to them.

Repeal of the Corporate Reputational Rating

The qualification of economic operators, like that of contracting authorities, is one of the pillars on which the public procurement market must stand: measuring quality is, in fact – both in the public and in the private sector – an indispensable driver of growth and a tool for encouraging healthy competition.

For this reason, the repeal of the corporate qualification mechanism, initially established by Article 109 of the Code – which could have provided an incentive for economic operators to invest more in themselves and in their own capabilities – was inappropriate.

We will, however, try to develop mechanisms within the framework

of the virtual dossier of economic operators to reward conscientious companies. Through the same virtual dossier, we will gradually simplify the activity of the Certifying Bodies, with whom we have already commenced discussions on the new Qualification Manual.

Challenges of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence in public procurement is an applied reality, not just a future prospect. Contracts, in fact, in addition to being the direct subject of automation, are also the tool used by administrations to purchase the respective software.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that one of the earliest and most far-sighted regulations on its practical use was established in the Code (Art. 30). However, the regulatory reference to some shared principles is certainly not sufficient to guarantee their effective translation into practice.

In fact, few in the PA are still able to manage it properly, with the risk, among the many, that some decisions, rightly reserved for public responsibility, end up being unwittingly delegated to private operators.

It is certainly important to stipulate that the provider must hand over the source code of the programme and other essential information about its architecture to the administration. However, these elements alone are not sufficient for providing an understanding of how the machine actually works, especially in the face of sophisticated forms of generative artificial intelligence. Even more importantly, how many civil servants using these technologies, or citizens responsible for making decisions, will really be able to understand these codes and thus grasp the logic of the choices made or suggested? How many will be able to identify potentially discriminatory mechanisms when the programmer himself did not even know he had added them in? Once again, as algorithms become part of everyday administrative action, to what extent will the official be willing to depart from the

machine's convenient conclusions in order to make an autonomous assessment, also exposing himself to the risk of predictable appeals?

The many issues include, primarily, delicate problems related to algorithmic transparency, increasingly the new frontier of administrative transparency, an essential requirement for public decisions to be fully understood and, therefore, for the rights of citizens and businesses to be protected.

Far from giving in to neo-luddite temptations, it is important for us to incentivise the use of such tools, which have now become essential for making administrative action simpler and faster. However, there must always be safeguards in place to ensure that all this is done in full awareness of the complexity of the issues raised, so that these transformations can be governed rather than us being governed by them.

Enabling skills to grow and valuing people

Faced with such challenges, the skills and competences of those working within the administrations, at all levels, take on an essential role. The key, in fact, is always people, in whom we need to invest more.

It is therefore crucial to provide constant training and refresher courses for civil servants in the various fields in which the Authority operates; we do this in collaboration with the National School of Administration (SNA), to which we are grateful for its precious assistance.

First in line are the Project Managers (RUPs), who are the real core of the procurement processes in the sectors just mentioned, crucial to the success of public investments and increasingly called upon to provide strategic vision and leadership.

They are the beating heart of the contracting authorities, and that

is why we intend to develop their role also by gathering information on their activity and performance, so as to create the conditions to reward adequately and selectively the professionalism with which they perform their role.

We also aim to encourage the sharing of experiences and good practices among all those working in this very strategic area, on the public as well as the private side, and to strengthen networks and associations, in order to establish a sense of pride and a spirit of belonging.

Some additional information on ANAC's activity

Once again in 2024, we worked to offer contracting authorities and economic operators concrete aids, taking a dynamic and collaborative approach.

Last year's figures reveal increasing demand for our services, with 123,753 incoming protocols and over 13,600 queries received through our channels.

Pre-litigation opinions and advisory function

Stakeholders can obtain support, first and foremost, in the pre-litigation and advisory functions, which have been strengthened by the new Code.

Administrations and operators draw useful guidelines from our opinions – 205 pre-litigation and 75 advisory over the past year – so that they can ensure their conduct is compliant and they can quickly identify solutions to disputes that have arisen, free of charge.

Ordinary supervision

All too often contracting authorities focus their attention exclusively on the tender, neglecting the actual execution of the works, which is

actually the time when the public interest underlying the contract is realised.

In awareness of this, in our intense supervisory activity carried out in 2024 – with 230 enquiries in the works sector and 500 in the services and supplies sector – we focused increasingly on the execution phase, taking a proactive stance to stimulate the contracting authorities to oversee the correct and accurate execution of the contract, in line with the principle of the result.

The dialogue-based approach produced a very high rate of compliance with the findings made.

Collaborative supervision

More and more energy is being put into providing practical support to contracting authorities.

We have therefore continued and intensified our collaborative supervision activities, signing a further 17 Protocols, plus the Framework Protocol with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport for the implementation of 102 priority works.

A total of 112 opinions were issued within an average period of just 6.5 days from the request being made.

Monocratic powers of the President

High supervision of public contracts

By means of high supervision of certain strategic investments, entrusted to monocratic presidential functions, we support public entities in the implementation of major projects in complex and problematic circumstances.

We have thus continued and strengthened our commitment,

alongside the emergency Commissioners, to the post-earthquake interventions in central Italy, as well as to the reconstruction of Ischia and to works in the Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Marche Regions.

In this context, we have tested an increasingly targeted supervision method in order to transfer skills and professionalism, also through the drafting of template deeds, sometimes produced by the commissioner structure on the Authority's previous templates and then shared with ANAC, in a fruitful exchange of experiences and joint work.

We would like to thank all the Commissioners for their cooperation and assistance.

Extraordinary management, support and monitoring measures for companies

The extraordinary measures for the management, support and monitoring of companies under investigation for corrupt acts, proposed by the ANAC President to the local Prefectures, are a useful tool for guaranteeing that contracts are fully executed and employment levels are safeguarded.

Even when applying these measures, we favour a collaborative approach. Given that the appointment of a prefectural Commissioner comes at a cost and that his presence is not always equally effective in the various organisational situations in question, we urge companies to solve their critical issues themselves, through appropriate transparency and self-cleaning actions, which we monitor very carefully.

Moreover, although the legislator, in establishing these institutions, has not regulated specific interventions on the contracting authority, we are also taking action on this front, in order to make the strategy more incisive overall, by performing close supervision of anti-corruption measures.

For further details on the activities carried out, with reference to the different competences, see the full Report, which can be downloaded from the Authority's website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CLOSING REMARKS

As I draw to a close, let me first of all thank my colleagues on the Board, Consuelo del Balzo, Luca Forteleoni, Paolo Giacomazzo and Laura Valli, as well as the General Secretary, Filippo Romano, for the passion, commitment and sense of belonging with which they have overseen each stage of our intense year of work.

Special thanks go, of course, not only to the Committee of Guarantors, the Board of Auditors and the Arbitration Chamber (both in its current and previous composition), but also to the Authority's Managers, Officials and all its Staff, who demonstrate on a daily basis their dedication to service and high-level professionalism.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the *Guardia di Finanza*, in its various branches, and to the *Carabinieri* Corps, for the professional and indispensable support they provide to our supervision activities. We must also express our sincere gratitude to the many institutions with which we collaborate in our widespread fields of action.

My heartfelt thanks go to our sister administrative Authorities, with whom we have established and consolidated effective and cooperative relationships over time, strengthening the independence of our institutions and guaranteeing the coherent application of the guidelines expressed, as well as to the administrative, accounting and ordinary Magistrates' Courts and Public Prosecutors' Offices. Special thanks to the State Attorney's Office for the professional and constant support shown to us.

Finally, I would like to thank the administrations, entities, civil society organisations and individuals who in various capacities have

collaborated and continue to collaborate with us in promoting the values of integrity and public ethics.

Corruption, like an invasive weed, takes root in soils that institutions fail to guard and it does so quickly, penetratingly and pervasively. It haunts people's lives, degrades the present and withers the future.

The artist Domenico Paladino's portrayal of it is iconic: an individual imprisoned in an inextricable thicket of cables, a contemporary Laocoön, unable to proclaim his own truth.

In order to guard against the risk of becoming entangled in such a plot, we strive to apply anti-corruption strategies, so as to combine controllability and efficiency, transparency and speed of execution, recognition of merit and openness to the market. We aim to strengthen internal competences in administrations, so that they are truly placed at the service of citizens, within a framework of economic growth and sustainable development. Practical actions to prevent corruption thus become not only a tool for avoiding the enormous damage it causes, but also a crucial lever for promoting a more transparent, impartial, fair and efficient administration and thus preserving confidence in public action.

It is a commitment to be made not by one institution alone, but by of them all; a journey to be taken together and in which every individual can take a leading role.

Thank you.

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