

What is the CPV?

The CPV was created in 1996 as a tool for improving transparency and efficiency in the field of public procurement. Use of standard terms in the CPV makes it easier for potential suppliers to identify the procurement contracts in which they are interested. The CPV also facilitates fast and accurate translation of contract notices for publication in the EC Official Journal, and makes it easier to establish procurement statistics.

The Classification of Products by Activity (CPA) was chosen as a basis to build on. It was done so mainly because the CPA was a coherent nomenclature and was well adapted to the industrial structure of the European Community. However, it is supplier-oriented rather than purchaser-oriented. Consequently, many changes were needed.

CPA codes have six digits. Two more digits were added in order to make codes more accurate. Note too that there is a ninth digit, in order to check if the eight others are correct. These codes and the definitions of products (goods and services) in all the languages of the European Union constitute the main vocabulary. The supplementary vocabulary is designed to help contracting entities describe the subject matter of contracts comprehensively. It includes a letter that defines the general field concerned (transports, textiles etc.) and four digits, the fourth one being a check-digit.

The use of the CPV when drafting public procurement notices remains optional. Its use will become mandatory with the entry into force of the forthcoming public procurement legislative package which is now in discussion in the Council and the European Parliament.

How to use the CPV?

Codes should be chosen as follows: the awarding entity should try to find a code that suits its needs as accurately as possible. Of course, several codes may be used. However, the first one will be considered the title. Therefore, it may be a little more general (with more zeros at the end) than the others, for instance if no accurate code is suitable.

See the example below for an illustration on how to use the codes. In this example, a contracting entity wants to get a road transport service for a fragile high technology device. Here are the codes that may interest it:

60000000 Land transport and transport via pipeline services
60100000 Land transport services
60110000 Passenger land transport services
[...]
60120000 Freight land transport services
60121000 Freight transport by railways
[...]
60122000 Freight transport services by road
60122100 Freight transport services by road in specialised vehicles
60122110 Transport services using refrigerated vehicles
60122120 Transport services using tanker vehicles
60122130 Transport services using vehicles adapted for bulk goods
60122140 Transport services using container vehicles
60122150 Transport services using furniture-removal vehicles
60122160 Security transport services
60122161 Armoured car services
60122170 Medical transport services
60200000 Pipeline transport services
[...]

The entity should look into 60122100 "Freight transport services by road in specialised vehicles", because there is no code placed below that suits its particular need. Then, it can make code 60122100 more accurate using a code from the supplementary vocabulary. In this case, it could be X009-9 "Left-hand drive", if the entity is English or Irish.