

Public procurement, incentives and investments: is this the road to digital transition?

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The crucial role of public procurement as a demand-side policy instrument to foster innovation is widely acknowledged. Public procurement is seen as key innovation policy tool to sustain firms' expectations and investment profitability (Edquist and Zabala-Iturriagagoitia, 2012; Crespi and Guarascio, 2019). Nevertheless, in Italy this instrument is still largely underutilized, with a loss of innovation opportunities, particularly in the strategic domain of digital technologies (European Commission, 2021). Public procurement - especially public procurement of innovative solutions- is therefore a priority nowadays to respond to the new opportunities and challenges opened-up by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) (Iossa et al., 2017). In this paper, we aim to deepen the knowledge in this area by assessing the role of public procurement not only to boost innovation in general (i.e. new products and processes), but also to support the digital transition by favouring the adoption of specific digital technologies (e.g. industrial robots, internet of things, big data analytics etc.). To do this, we conduct an empirical analysis using micro-data provided by the 'Rilevazione Imprese e Lavoro' (RIL) survey carried out by the 'Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche' (INAPP) for the years 2015 and 2018.