

Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (Text with EEA relevance)

TITLE II

**RULES ON PUBLIC CONTRACTS**

*CHAPTER III*

***Conduct of the procedure***

*Section 1*

***Preparation***

*Article 40*

**Preliminary market consultations**

Before launching a procurement procedure, contracting authorities may conduct market consultations with a view to preparing the procurement and informing economic operators of their procurement plans and requirements.

For this purpose, contracting authorities may for example seek or accept advice from independent experts or authorities or from market participants. That advice may be used in the planning and conduct of the procurement procedure, provided that such advice does not have the effect of distorting competition and does not result in a violation of the principles of non-discrimination and transparency.

*Article 41*

**Prior involvement of candidates or tenderers**

Where a candidate or tenderer or an undertaking related to a candidate or tenderer has advised the contracting authority, whether in the context of Article 40 or not, or has otherwise been involved in the preparation of the procurement procedure, the contracting authority shall take appropriate measures to ensure that competition is not distorted by the participation of that candidate or tenderer.

Such measures shall include the communication to the other candidates and tenderers of relevant information exchanged in the context of or resulting from the involvement of the candidate or tenderer in the preparation of the procurement procedure and the fixing of adequate time limits for the receipt of tenders. The candidate or tenderer concerned shall only be excluded from the procedure where there are no other means to ensure compliance with the duty to observe the principle of equal treatment.

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Prior to any such exclusion, candidates or tenderers shall be given the opportunity to prove that their involvement in preparing the procurement procedure is not capable of distorting competition. The measures taken shall be documented in the individual report required by Article 84.

## Article 42

### Technical specifications

1 The technical specifications as defined in point 1 of Annex VII shall be set out in the procurement documents. The technical specification shall lay down the characteristics required of a works, service or supply.

Those characteristics may also refer to the specific process or method of production or provision of the requested works, supplies or services or to a specific process for another stage of its life cycle even where such factors do not form part of their material substance provided that they are linked to the subject-matter of the contract and proportionate to its value and its objectives.

The technical specifications may also specify whether the transfer of intellectual property rights will be required.

For all procurement which is intended for use by natural persons, whether general public or staff of the contracting authority, the technical specifications shall, except in duly justified cases, be drawn up so as to take into account accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities or design for all users.

Where mandatory accessibility requirements are adopted by a legal act of the Union, technical specifications shall, as far as accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities or design for all users are concerned, be defined by reference thereto.

2 Technical specifications shall afford equal access of economic operators to the procurement procedure and shall not have the effect of creating unjustified obstacles to the opening up of public procurement to competition.

3 Without prejudice to mandatory national technical rules, to the extent that they are compatible with Union law, the technical specifications shall be formulated in one of the following ways:

- a in terms of performance or functional requirements, including environmental characteristics, provided that the parameters are sufficiently precise to allow tenderers to determine the subject-matter of the contract and to allow contracting authorities to award the contract;
- b by reference to technical specifications and, in order of preference, to national standards transposing European standards, European Technical Assessments, common technical specifications, international standards, other technical reference systems established by the European standardisation bodies or - when any of those do not exist - national standards, national technical approvals or national technical specifications relating to the design, calculation and execution of the works and use of the supplies; each reference shall be accompanied by the words 'or equivalent';
- c in terms of performance or functional requirements as referred to in point (a), with reference to the technical specifications referred to in point (b) as a means of presuming conformity with such performance or functional requirements;

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- d by reference to the technical specifications referred to in point (b) for certain characteristics, and by reference to the performance or functional requirements referred to in point (a) for other characteristics.

4 Unless justified by the subject-matter of the contract, technical specifications shall not refer to a specific make or source, or a particular process which characterises the products or services provided by a specific economic operator, or to trade marks, patents, types or a specific origin or production with the effect of favouring or eliminating certain undertakings or certain products. Such reference shall be permitted on an exceptional basis, where a sufficiently precise and intelligible description of the subject-matter of the contract pursuant to paragraph 3 is not possible. Such reference shall be accompanied by the words ‘or equivalent’.

5 Where a contracting authority uses the option of referring to the technical specifications referred to in point (b) of paragraph 3, it shall not reject a tender on the grounds that the works, supplies or services tendered for do not comply with the technical specifications to which it has referred, once the tenderer proves in its tender by any appropriate means, including the means of proof referred to in Article 44, that the solutions proposed satisfy in an equivalent manner the requirements defined by the technical specifications.

6 Where a contracting authority uses the option laid down in point (a) of paragraph 3 to formulate technical specifications in terms of performance or functional requirements, it shall not reject a tender for works, supplies or services which comply with a national standard transposing a European standard, a European technical approval, a common technical specification, an international standard or a technical reference system established by a European standardisation body, where those specifications address the performance or functional requirements which it has laid down.

In its tender, the tenderer shall prove by any appropriate means, including those referred to in Article 44, that the work, supply or service in compliance with the standard meets the performance or functional requirements of the contracting authority.

### *Article 43*

#### **Labels**

1 Where contracting authorities intend to purchase works, supplies or services with specific environmental, social or other characteristics they may, in the technical specifications, the award criteria or the contract performance conditions, require a specific label as means of proof that the works, services or supplies correspond to the required characteristics, provided that all of the following conditions are fulfilled:

- a the label requirements only concern criteria which are linked to the subject-matter of the contract and are appropriate to define characteristics of the works, supplies or services that are the subject-matter of the contract;
- b the label requirements are based on objectively verifiable and non-discriminatory criteria;
- c the labels are established in an open and transparent procedure in which all relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, consumers, social partners, manufacturers, distributors and non-governmental organisations, may participate;
- d the labels are accessible to all interested parties;
- e the label requirements are set by a third party over which the economic operator applying for the label cannot exercise a decisive influence.

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Where contracting authorities do not require the works, supplies or services to meet all of the label requirements, they shall indicate which label requirements are referred to.

Contracting authorities requiring a specific label shall accept all labels that confirm that the works, supplies or services meet equivalent label requirements.

Where an economic operator had demonstrably no possibility of obtaining the specific label indicated by the contracting authority or an equivalent label within the relevant time limits for reasons that are not attributable to that economic operator, the contracting authority shall accept other appropriate means of proof, which may include a technical dossier from the manufacturer, provided that the economic operator concerned proves that the works, supplies or services to be provided by it fulfil the requirements of the specific label or the specific requirements indicated by the contracting authority.

2 Where a label fulfils the conditions provided in points (b), (c), (d) and (e) of paragraph 1 but also sets out requirements not linked to the subject-matter of the contract, contracting authorities shall not require the label as such but may define the technical specification by reference to those of the detailed specifications of that label, or, where necessary, parts thereof, that are linked to the subject-matter of the contract and are appropriate to define characteristics of this subject-matter.

#### *Article 44*

#### **Test reports, certification and other means of proof**

1 Contracting authorities may require that economic operators provide a test report from a conformity assessment body or a certificate issued by such a body as means of proof of conformity with requirements or criteria set out in the technical specifications, the award criteria or the contract performance conditions.

Where contracting authorities require the submission of certificates drawn up by a specific conformity assessment body, certificates from equivalent other conformity assessment bodies shall also be accepted by the contracting authorities.

For the purpose of this paragraph, a conformity assessment body shall be a body that performs conformity assessment activities including calibration, testing, certification and inspection accredited in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>(1)</sup>.

2 Contracting authorities shall accept other appropriate means of proof than those referred to in paragraph 1, such as a technical dossier of the manufacturer where the economic operator concerned had no access to the certificates or test reports referred to in paragraph 1, or no possibility of obtaining them within the relevant time limits, provided that the lack of access is not attributable to the economic operator concerned and provided that the economic operator concerned thereby proves that the works, supplies or services provided by it meet the requirements or criteria set out in the technical specifications, the award criteria or the contract performance conditions.

3 Member States shall make available to other Member States, upon request, any information related to the evidence and documents submitted in accordance with Article 42(6), Article 43 and paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article. The competent authorities of the Member State of establishment of the economic operator shall provide this information in accordance with Article 86.

## Article 45

### Variants

1 Contracting authorities may authorise or require tenderers to submit variants. They shall indicate in the contract notice or, where a prior information notice is used as a means of calling for competition, in the invitation to confirm interest whether or not they authorise or require variants. Variants shall not be authorised without such indication. Variants shall be linked to the subject-matter of the contract.

2 Contracting authorities authorising or requiring variants shall state in the procurement documents the minimum requirements to be met by the variants and any specific requirements for their presentation, in particular whether variants may be submitted only where a tender, which is not a variant, has also been submitted. They shall also ensure that the chosen award criteria can be applied to variants meeting those minimum requirements as well as to conforming tenders which are not variants.

3 Only variants meeting the minimum requirements laid down by the contracting authorities shall be taken into consideration.

In procedures for awarding public supply or service contracts, contracting authorities that have authorised or required variants shall not reject a variant on the sole ground that it would, where successful, lead to either a service contract rather than a public supply contract or a supply contract rather than a public service contract.

## Article 46

### Division of contracts into lots

1 Contracting authorities may decide to award a contract in the form of separate lots and may determine the size and subject-matter of such lots.

Contracting authorities shall, except in respect of contracts whose division has been made mandatory pursuant to paragraph 4 of this Article, provide an indication of the main reasons for their decision not to subdivide into lots, which shall be included in the procurement documents or the individual report referred to in Article 84.

2 Contracting authorities shall indicate, in the contract notice or in the invitation to confirm interest, whether tenders may be submitted for one, for several or for all of the lots.

Contracting authorities may, even where tenders may be submitted for several or all lots, limit the number of lots that may be awarded to one tenderer, provided that the maximum number of lots per tenderer is stated in the contract notice or in the invitation to confirm interest. Contracting authorities shall indicate in the procurement documents the objective and non-discriminatory criteria or rules they intend to apply for determining which lots will be awarded where the application of the award criteria would result in one tenderer being awarded more lots than the maximum number.

3 Member States may provide that, where more than one lot may be awarded to the same tenderer, contracting authorities may award contracts combining several or all lots where they have specified in the contract notice or in the invitation to confirm interest that they reserve the possibility of doing so and indicate the lots or groups of lots that may be combined.

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4 Member States may implement the second subparagraph of paragraph 1 by rendering it obligatory to award contracts in the form of separate lots under conditions to be specified in accordance with their national law and having regard for Union law. In such circumstances the first subparagraph of paragraph 2 and, where appropriate, paragraph 3 shall apply.

#### *Article 47*

#### **Setting time limits**

1 When fixing the time limits for the receipt of tenders and requests to participate, contracting authorities shall take account of the complexity of the contract and the time required for drawing up tenders, without prejudice to the minimum time limits set out in Articles 27 to 31.

2 Where tenders can be made only after a visit to the site or after on-the-spot inspection of the documents supporting the procurement documents, the time limits for the receipt of tenders, which shall be longer than the minimum time limits set out in Articles 27 to 31, shall be fixed so that all economic operators concerned may be aware of all the information needed to produce tenders.

3 Contracting authorities shall extend the time limits for the receipt of tenders so that all economic operators concerned may be aware of all the information needed to produce tenders in the following cases:

- a where, for whatever reason, additional information, although requested by the economic operator in good time, is not supplied at the latest six days before the time limit fixed for the receipt of tenders. In the event of an accelerated procedure as referred to in Article 27(3) and Article 28(6), that period shall be four days;
- b where significant changes are made to the procurement documents.

The length of the extension shall be proportionate to the importance of the information or change.

Where the additional information has either not been requested in good time or its importance with a view to preparing responsive tenders is insignificant, contracting authorities shall not be required to extend the time limits.

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- (1) Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance relating to the marketing of products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 339/93 ([OJ L 218, 13.8.2008, p. 30](#)).