

Department of Contracts
Notre Dame Ravelin
FLORIANA

To: Permanent Secretaries
Directors General
Directors
Heads of Public Sector Organisations

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E-PROCUREMENT – ARCHIVING OF CALLS FOR TENDERS

Following the mandatory requirement to use e-procurement for the publication of tenders above the €120,000 threshold, the usage of the Electronic Public Procurement System (ePPS) has drastically increased since last year. The ePPS currently hosts over 5,300 Call for Tenders (CfTs), while only during Quarter 1 of 2014, approximately 1,400 CfTs were published. An average of 15 CfTs are being published daily through the system. This continuously increasing usage, which is encouraging, has an impact on the storage capacity needs of the ePPS. In particular, with the current and anticipated pace of the increased ePPS usage, the disk space requirements are expected to be increased by an average of approximately 6GBs/week in the near future and although in recent system maintenance activities the system developers granted additional disk space to the ePPS Service, the quick pace in which ePPS usage is increasing requires further action.

The functional provision of the ePPS for disk space management relates to the “archiving” of awarded CfTs. So far none of the CfTs in the ePPS is archived. In particular, when a CfT is awarded, the ePPS allows the PO/TCs to export the CfT in a zip and then archive the CfT. Through this, only core information of an awarded CfT (i.e. CfT details, associated officers, participating EOs, awarded EOs) and the export zip file are retained; all other CfT information is deleted, releasing large amounts of disk space. It is being clarified here that the export zip file includes the full documentation of the CfT (documents, tenders, evaluation reports, audit reports, etc) which can be retrieved and accessed by buyers (i.e. PO/TCs and SA users) and Auditors at any moment.

In contrast to Contracting Authorities (CAs), Economic Operators (EOs) will not be able to download the CfT export zip file. Instead they will continue to have access through the “Search” function to the following information once a CfT is archived:

- All EOs that participated in a given CfT;
- All submitted financial offers; and
- The winning bid(s)

In view of the foregoing, the time-frames within which an awarded CfT will be eligible for archival have been reduced from the current lapse of two years from its award date, to six (6) months. This will ensure that valuable system resources are not consumed for maintaining unnecessary data. Thus, with immediate effect, all Contracting Authorities are being solicited to proceed with archiving tasks, as soon as this is allowed by the system, unless exceptional circumstances are experienced (eg. legal dispute). **The whole process of exporting and archiving CfTs awarded over 6 months ago, which is explained in this Circular, must be completed by the end of July 2014. Furthermore, from June 2014, when six months from awarding is elapsed, CAs must export and archive their CfTs.** The Department of Contracts will be assisted by the system developers to bring this policy into effect by monitoring all CfTs and inform the Department regarding CfTs that are not archived although they could.

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED FOR EXPORTING AND ARCHIVING CfTs (IRRESPECTIVE OF THE VALUE OF THE CfT) - CA/SA user manuals available under the 'help' tab upon logging into the ePPS include details/screenshots for the exporting and archival process

Exporting CfTs:

All relevant documents shall be uploaded onto the Call for Tenders (CfTs) Restricted Area. The documents uploaded at this stage will be included in the final exported zip file, and so the exported file will also include all the CfT-related documentation which was not created within the system.

Some of the documents which are to be uploaded onto the Restricted Area, if relevant, include:

- Commitment Form
- Tender Originators Form
- Government Gazette Advert
- Nomination/Approval of EC Members
- Recommendations by GCC/DCC
- Manual Clarifications
- Schedule of Award
- Letters to successful/unsuccessful
- PCRB decisions
- Contract (up to signatures and special conditions)
- Guarantees etc...

In order for Contracting Authorities to perform such a task they must follow this process:

- Find a particular CfT
- Click on 'Show CfT Menu' button
- Select 'Restricted Area'
- Click on 'Upload document'
- Enter the requested information (title/language/description/status) and browse for document
- Select 'Create'

The uploading of such documents in the Restricted Area will enable a more efficient auditing process at a later stage when Auditors are given access to the exported zip file via the system.

Once the above process is completed and all relevant documents pertaining to the respective CfT are uploaded in the Restricted Area, the Contracting Authority can export the particular CfT.

The 'Export CfT' functionality is accessible to the PO/TC, the PO/ES and the PO/ESR, and allows them to produce, in most cases, a single, easy to download, compressed file containing all documents and information and where the file size limit (150MB) is exceeded more than one file will be available for download that make up the export. As the CfT progresses towards the awarded state, the Zip export will be enriched with new information and documentation, including documents which although not automatically captured through the system would be uploaded as explained above. In order to export a particular CfT, one has to follow the below steps from the 'View CfT' page:

- Click on 'Export CfT'
- Click on 'Refresh page' (this may take some time)
- Click on 'Download CfT' (this will prompt the user to download locally, e.g. on a PC, the generated data file in a compressed format)

Archiving CfTs:

After downloading all the part files generated by the Export CfT task, and a period of six months from awarding is elapsed, the CfT can be archived. At the bottom of the CfT Workspace, a new button will be created called Archive CfT (also an Archive CfT task will appear on the TC's Task List). If this button is clicked, you will be given the following warning:

Are you sure you want to archive this CfT? All details of the CfT excluding core and awarding information will be archived.

Once this is confirmed, the CfT will be archived, leaving only the CfT Workspace, Associated Officers, the Participating Tenderers, and the Awarded Contracts details available for viewing. Archived CfTs are then moved from "List of my CfTs" to "List of archived CfTs" under CfT Management.

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