



29 June 2011

Changes urged for procurement policy and regulation to better support global quality

Architects and consulting engineers join forces to draw the attention of the European legislators drafting a new European policy and regulation on public procurement to the fact that quality criteria are a fundamental requirement in public procurement, and should thus be given full consideration in the awarding procedure. The European Commission's claim of EUR 20 billion in savings through increased European competition is meaningless if there is no simultaneous increase in global quality. The value for money principle, as implicitly considered in pure financial terms in the former 1992 and 2004 directives on public procurement, has to be fundamentally reviewed, with a correlated improvement through the modernisation of EU public procurement that will be initiated at the European Commission Conference taking place on 30th June.

The European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations (EFCA) and the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), representing the technology based intellectual service providers in Europe, welcome the Green Paper on the modernisation of EU public procurement policy: Towards a more efficient European Procurement Market.

Both federations, ACE and EFCA, are grateful for the opportunity offered to comment on the Green Paper on public procurement. Their replies are based on their experience on how EU procurement policy can be improved.

Architects and consulting engineers play a key role in the sustainability of public projects by incorporating the latest technologies and innovations, having access to pertinent information and bringing quality expertise to the initial design phases. But this means that the tendering process must allow for more quality criteria during the selection stage – because basing final decisions on lowest cost is creating abnormally low-priced offers and can be a false economy in the long run.

In their proposals, ACE and EFCA are calling for changes in two main areas:

- the position of creative intellectual services in the procurement chain;
- value-for-money, considering a selection process with more emphasis on quality, life cycle cost approach and green procurement.

Intellectual creative services are more than suppliers; they are trusted advisors

In this respect, EFCA President Jan Bosschem said that “Architects and consulting engineering are trusted advisors to clients, they offer creative services. Design and management services account for just 10% of overall construction costs, or 3% of construction and operation costs. Therefore, intellectual services cannot be tendered in the same way as commodities, and the procedures and selection criteria need to reflect that.” ACE and EFCA propose a phased approach, based on a negotiated procedure that allows for discussion on project scope and remuneration with the best technical team.

ACE President Selma Harrington commented “The problem is exacerbated for most SMEs which, because of their size, have major difficulty in accessing the European public market. For the future, architects and consulting engineers should be considered as expert networkers with sophisticated systems to synthesise information and best practices from many countries and sectors, to source resources and find best solutions for a client.”

More emphasis on quality

Among the awarding criteria **the lowest price still plays a detrimental role**. In the awarding of architectural and engineering services, the awarding criteria are often, in fact, restricted to the price; **life-cycle costs and sustainability and environmental issues still do not play a predominant role**.

The directives should in the future provide **for a strictly quality-based awarding of contracts in the sector of architecture and engineering**. The current awarding practice conflicts fundamentally with the respective EU policies aiming at sustainable development.

At the time of the previous revision of the procurement directive in 2004, sustainability and life cycle cost considerations were less considered than today. It is time to change this. The current policy review provides the opportunity to create market conditions in which independent creative intellectual services can effectively offer high-quality, innovative and sustainable solutions.

Jan Bosschem
EFCA President

Selma Harrington
ACE President

___ ENDS ___

<p>EFCA has member associations in 26 countries, and is the sole European federation representing the business interests of professional engineering consultancy and related services, a sector that employs around one million staff in Europe.</p>	<p>ACE is the representative body for the architectural profession in the European Union. It has 45 member organisations and represents over 450,000 practising architects.</p>
<p>Jan Van der Putten Secretary-General EFCA Avenue des Arts 3-5 B-1210 Brussels Belgium Tel: +32 209 07 70 Email: jvanderputten@efca.be www.efcanet.org</p>	<p>Selma Harrington President ACE 29 rue Paul Emile Jansen B-1050 Brussels Belgium Tel: +32 2 543 11 40 Email: president@ace-cae.eu www.ace-cae.eu</p>