



## Press Release

Luxembourg, 13 July 2016

# EU Institutions should make bidding for contracts easier, say Auditors

**The EU Institutions should do more to help businesses find contracts on offer and bid for them, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. The auditors call for a cut in the red tape involved in EU public procurement and a new online platform with contracts from all the Institutions.**

The auditors examined how accessible the Institutions made their public contracts. They found that the management and control arrangements were robust and reduced the risk of errors which could deter businesses from participating and prevent fair treatment. However, when the Institutions revised the rules in 2015, they did not open up access by simplifying procedures and clarifying grey areas as much as possible. Procurement by the main EU Institutions — the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Central Bank — amounted to some €4 billion in 2014.

*“The EU Institutions should do more to help businesses — especially SMEs — by cutting red tape as much as possible and removing the unnecessary hurdles facing anyone who wants to find out what contracts are on offer,”* said **Alex Brenninkmeijer, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report.**

Most of the Institutions had no practice of consulting the market before starting a formal procurement procedure, say the auditors. Moreover, contracts could have been divided into lots more frequently in order to stimulate participation. This would have had a positive effect on the accessibility for economic operators such as small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, the auditors say that the online visibility of the EU Institutions’ procurement opportunities is poor. The information available is patchy and spread over many different websites. The search function on Tenders Electronic Daily is not always satisfactory, and e-tendering has not yet been rolled out in a comprehensive and harmonised manner.

Businesses which feel they have been unfairly treated find it difficult to obtain a rapid review of their complaints and compensation. Information on the outcome of calls for tender is not accessible in a way that allows for effective public monitoring.

*The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu)*

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The auditors make the following **main recommendations**:

- The Institutions should jointly create an online one-stop procurement shop where tenderers can find all the information they need and interact with the Institutions. They should set up a single public repository of information regarding previous contracts, and all the regulations on procurement should be consolidated into a single rulebook.
- SME participation should be explicitly encouraged.
- The Institutions should use preliminary market consultations wherever appropriate to inform businesses of their plans.
- Contracts should be divided into lots wherever possible to increase participation.
- The Commission should propose a mechanism for the rapid and independent review of complaints from businesses which feel unfairly treated.
- The European Anti-Fraud Office should report on any allegations under investigation and their outcome.

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Special report No 17/2016: “The EU institutions can do more to facilitate access to their public procurement” is available in 23 EU languages.