

GENERAL INVITATION TO TENDER

No ECFIN/2006/A3-01

An EU-wide monthly business survey in the financial services sector

TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

**These specifications follow the publication of the contract notice in
OJEU S 172-182945 of 9 September 2006**

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PART I : TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

1. NATURE OF THE CONTRACT

A framework service contract will be concluded with the purpose of conducting “EU-wide monthly business survey in the financial services sector”.

Following the call for tenders, one contractor will be selected and a framework contract signed with him for a maximum period of four years.

Each annual survey will be carried out on the basis of a specific contract signed by the Commission and the Contractor for a maximum period of 15 months.

2. BACKGROUND

The Treaty on the European Union (EU) places upon the European Commission, Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), specific tasks of economic policy and analysis for the euro area and the EU as a whole.

To ensure the smooth functioning of Economic and Monetary Union, DG ECFIN's responsibilities focus on economic surveillance, monitoring of budgetary policy, public finances, economic policy coordination and forecasting, integration of EU capital markets, freedom of capital movements, economic relations with third countries and other important financing operations.

One of the actions undertaken under the objective to support the Commission's internal capacity to carry out economic analysis is the harmonisation, coordination, analysis and dissemination of business surveys in the EU Member States.

To this effect, surveys are carried out in various economic sectors (industry, construction, retail trade, investment, services sector and households) in accordance with a harmonised methodology. Results are published on a monthly basis.

Legal base :

The Joint Harmonised European Union Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys is adopted by the Commission by virtue of its institutional prerogatives in accordance with Article 49(2)(c) of the Financial Regulation.

3. OBJECTIVES

The Commission has been carrying out its Programme of EU Business and Consumer Surveys for more than 40 years. Over time, the coverage of the surveys has been extended to most sectors of the economy. The financial services sector has, however, not yet been included in the regular survey programme.

Given the importance of the financial services sector for the development of the overall economy, the Commission contracted a pilot survey in the financial services sector on an EU-wide scale for a period of one year (ending in March 2007). After a positive assessment of the

first results, the Commission decided to continue the survey and, therefore, launches a new Call for Tender.

The survey should be carried out on a monthly basis and the Commission intends to publish the survey results within its regular publication programme of business and consumer survey data. Apart from the transmission of the monthly survey results, evaluation reports will be required on a regular basis (see details under points 4 and 5). The contractor will perform the tasks requested working in close cooperation with the relevant Commission department, in particular DG ECFIN's "*Business Surveys*" unit.

4. CONTENT

4.1 Tasks to be performed by the contractor and monitoring by the Commission

The survey should be carried out on a monthly basis and address senior managers in the sectors 65, 66 and 67 of the Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE), Rev.1.1. In order to be able to achieve representative results for the euro area and the EU as a whole, the survey should be conducted in a sufficiently large number of EU Member States. The bulk of the field work should be carried out in these countries during the first half of each month. Regardless of the eventual choice of countries, the survey should in any case cover at least the following countries: Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The questionnaire underlying the survey should consist of two parts (**Annex 5**). The first part of the questionnaire should be repeated every month and contains five questions which are related to the business situation, demand and employment; these questions are the same as those included in the harmonised survey questionnaire for the services survey. The second part of the questionnaire contains questions that are asked on a quarterly basis in the first month of each quarter. The contractor shall use the questionnaire as included in **Annex 5**.

In the framework of the regular evaluation reports (see point 4.4), the results should be analysed also with regard to propose modifications to the questionnaire, if deemed necessary. The proposed modifications should be implemented following agreement with the Commission. The Commission may also, after common agreement with the contractor modify the questionnaire. Such a degree of flexibility in the set of questions seems warranted especially at this early stage of data collection.

The questionnaire should be in English. The contractor is allowed to provide a translation of the questionnaire in addition to the English version in cases where this seems suitable and can improve the understanding of the questions. Such translations can be useful, for instance, in the case of technical terms.

The contractor enjoys a certain freedom with regard to the methodological aspects of the survey including sample design, survey mode, sample size per country and sector, coverage rate, etc. However, the contractor can find useful recommendations and references in the below-cited studies as well as in the **User Guide** of the Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys (see point 4.3)

The contractor should provide full details on the methodological aspects of the survey. In particular, the contractor shall provide full details on the methodology to be applied for the set-up of a weighting scheme with a view to producing aggregated results for the euro area and the EU as a whole. The methodological information will play an important role in the award procedure (see part III).

As for other EU business survey data, the Commission intends to seasonally adjust the gross results, provided the required minimum length of time series has been achieved. The contractor, in close cooperation with the Commission, shall contribute to the production of seasonally adjusted survey data.

4.2 DELIVERABLES

During the duration of the **contract**, the following deliverables shall be submitted by the contractor. Each deliverable will be examined by the Commission, which may ask for complementary information or propose adjustments in order to redirect the work when necessary.

4.2.1 Monthly transmission of the survey results

The contractor shall transmit the monthly survey results (data) according to the indicative timetable mentioned below and technical modalities set out in **Annex 7**.

The contractor should send the results of the survey in the form of averages for the three sectors for each country, the euro area and the EU as a whole in accordance with the templates set out in **Annex 6a** and the technical modalities in **Annex 7**. The country-specific weights for calculating the euro area and EU aggregates should be agreed with the Commission.

The data covering the period April 2007 to March 2008 should be made available electronically and, as a general rule, e-mailed at least 4 working days before the end of the current month in accordance with the following calendar:

April 2007	25 April 2007	Time: 16:00
May 2007	25 May 2007	Time: 16:00
June 2007	26 June 2007	Time: 16:00
July 2007	26 July 2007	Time: 16:00
August 2007	28 August 2007	Time: 16:00
September 2007	25 September 2007	Time: 16:00
October 2007	26 October 2007	Time: 16:00
November 2007	27 November 2007	Time: 16:00
December 2007	26 December 2007	Time: 16:00
January 2008	28 January 2008	Time: 16:00
February 2008	26 February 2008	Time: 16:00
March 2008	26 March 2008	Time: 16:00

Detailed calendars, covering the periods April 2008 to March 2009, April 2009 to March 2010 and April 2010 to March 2011, respectively, will be provided by the Commission in due time.

For analytical purposes, the Commission may request to receive the individual results, i.e. the results per questionnaire, in anonymous form together with the weights necessary to calculate the aggregate results per country and sector in accordance with the sampling method chosen. For this purpose, the contractor should send the data in accordance with the templates set out in **Annex 6b** and the technical modalities in **Annex 7**.

4.2.2 Evaluation reports

At half-yearly intervals, the contractor shall submit the required evaluation reports in accordance with the modalities set out in point 4.4.

4.3 Documentation for tenderers

- The following **studies** contracted by the European Commission can be consulted:
 - Business Surveys in the Financial Sector – July 2002
Daniel Bloesch, Richard Etter – ETH KOF
http://ec.europa.eu:8082/economy_finance/tenders/2006/call2006_9en.htm
 - Feasibility of EU Business Survey in the Financial Services Sector – Nov. 2004
Daniel Bloesch, Richard Etter – ETH KOF
http://ec.europa.eu:8082/economy_finance/tenders/2006/call2006_9en.htm
- The Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys **User Guide** contains detailed explanations on the methodology used and can be downloaded from:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/indicators/business_consumer_surveys/user_guide_en.pdf
- European Central Bank, A **Bank Lending Survey** for the euro area, Monthly Bulletin, April 2003, pp. 65-75 (<http://www.ecb.int/pub/pdf/mobu/mb200304en.pdf>)

4.4 Reports and documents to be submitted

The contractor is to provide the required evaluation reports and documents in accordance with the conditions of the draft framework service contract (see part IV), and more specifically :

4.4.1 Interim report

After the completion of six monthly surveys, the contractor will submit an interim report in English **by 15th October 2007** containing an analysis of the results for the surveys for the months **April 2007 - September 2007** and a description of the methodology used. In particular, the report should contain information on the number of firms interviewed by sector in each country. Moreover, the report should present an analysis of the reliability of the results (influence of firm size, response rate, representativeness, etc.).

If appropriate and based on the experience during the first six months, the interim report should contain recommendations for changes in the questionnaires and/or in the methodological set-up. The Commission may, based on its own analysis of the results and after discussion with the contractor, propose changes in the questionnaire. Such changes, which should not increase the overall number of questions, should be considered binding for the contractor.

The Commission will inform in writing the contractor whether it accepts the interim report or send its comments within 30 days. The contractor shall have 30 days in which to submit an amended interim report.

4.4.2 Annual report

After the completion of 12 monthly surveys, the contractor will submit an annual evaluation report in English **by 30th April 2008** containing an analysis of the results of the surveys for the months **April 2007 – March 2008**. This report should also include a more detailed presentation of the work carried out and the methodology used. If appropriate and based on the experience gathered during the survey, the annual report should contain recommendations for changes in the questionnaires and/or the methodological set-up. The annual report shall also include a comparison of the survey results with other quantitative and qualitative statistics. Such a benchmark analysis might provide further evidence for the scope, the reliability and the overall quality of the survey results.

The Commission will inform in writing the contractor whether it accepts the annual report or send its comments within 30 days. The contractor shall have 30 days in which to submit an amended annual report.

5. INDICATIVE TABLE FOR THE WORK, DELIVERABLES

5.1 Starting date of the contract and duration of the tasks

The framework contract is due to be signed in December 2006.

The framework contract will be concluded for a period of one year from when it is signed. The framework contract may be renewed up to three times under the same conditions each time for a period of 12 months only before expiry of the Contract and with express written agreement of the parties. The total duration of a framework contract may not exceed four years from when it is first signed.

The specific contracts will be concluded for a maximum period of 15 months.

5.2 Place of performance

The place of performance of the tasks shall be the contractor's premises or any other place indicated in the tender, with the exception of the Commission's premises.

PART II: ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

6. GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

- Submission of a tender implies that the contractor accepts all the terms and conditions set out in these specifications (including the Annexes) and waives all other terms of business.
- Submission of a tender binds the contractor to whom the contract is awarded during performance of the Contract.
- Changes to tenders will be accepted only if they are received on or before the final date set for the receipt of tenders.
- Expenses incurred in respect of the preparation and presentation of tenders cannot be refunded.
- No information of any kind will be given on the state of progress with regard to the evaluation of tenders.
- Once the Commission has accepted the tender, it shall become the property of the Commission and the Commission shall treat it confidentially.
- The protocol on the Privileges and Immunities or, where appropriate, the Vienna Convention of 24 April 1963 on Consular Relations shall apply to this invitation to tender.

7. NO OBLIGATION TO AWARD THE CONTRACT

- Fulfilment of adjudication or invitation to tender procedure shall not involve the Commission in any obligation to award the contract.
- The Commission shall not be liable for any compensation with respect to tenderers whose tenders have not been accepted. Nor shall it be liable in the event of its deciding not to award the contract.

8. JOINT TENDERS

When a partnership or a consortium is envisaged, two possibilities are acceptable :

1. The offer originates from a consortium already formally set up as a separate and legal entity able to submit its statutes, mode of operation, technical and financial capacity, such as result from the contributions of its various members. It is such a consortium that will bear the technical and financial responsibility for the contract and will present the requested financial guarantee.
2. The offer originates from companies not wishing to constitute formally a consortium as a separate legal entity and thus constituting effectively an association. In such a case, the offer will be submitted in the form of subcontracting (cf. 9), in which case one of the companies shall assume the total responsibility for the offer. This company will sign the contract in its name, the other companies then being regarded as subcontractors of the first.

In those two cases of joint tenders, the information required below under sections 11.1 “administrative information”, 12 “information for assessment of exclusion criteria” and 13 “information for assessment of selection criteria” must be provided for all members participating in the tender.

In the case of this specific invitation to tender, the offers originated from companies not yet having created a consortium as a separate legal entity but planning to constitute one as referred to in item 1, **will not be accepted**.

9. SUBCONTRACTORS

- Where, in a bid, the amount of the services executed by a subcontractor is equal to or exceeds 20% of the contract, the subcontractor must provide all the necessary documents for assessing the bid as a whole with regard to the exclusion criteria, selection criteria (as a whole) and award criteria. Where those services represent less than 20% of the contract, the subcontractor shall not be required to provide documents on his financial and economic capacity.
- The bid must clearly identify the subcontractor(s) and document their willingness to accept the tasks and their acceptance of the terms and conditions set out in 6 above.
- Tenderers must inform the subcontractor(s) that Article II.17 of the draft service contract will applied to them.
- Once the contract has been signed, Article II.13 of the above-mentioned service contract shall govern the subcontracting.

10. DETAILS OF THE CONTRACT

10.1 Terms of payment

Payments shall be made in accordance with Article I.4 of the draft service contract. The schedule and the procedure for the approval of payments and the documents to be submitted are described in Articles II.4, II.5, II.6 and II.7 to the draft service contract referred to above.

10.2 Contractual terms and guarantees

In drawing up his bid, the tenderer should bear in mind the provisions of the draft service contract attached to this invitation to tender.

11. CONTENT OF THE TENDER

All tenders must be presented in three sections :

- An administrative proposal
- A technical proposal
- A financial proposal

11.1 Administrative proposal

- A compulsory reply form (see **Annex 4**) shall provide the following information:

- the tenderer's name and/or business name
 - a clear description of the tenderer's legal form
 - address of the tenderer's registered office
 - the tenderer's telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address and where available, Internet address
 - the names of the legal representatives (directors, etc) of the tenderer, authorised to sign contracts with third parties on behalf of the organization;
 - the tenderer's VAT number and trade-register entry number
- A bank identification form filled in and signed by an authorised representative of the tenderer and his bank (see **Annex 1**).
 - A legal entity form duly completed and signed (see **Annex 2**).
 - A signed declaration of the candidate's eligibility; certifying that he/she is not in one of the situations listed in articles 93 and 94 of the Financial Regulation of the European Communities (Official Journal L 248 of 16/09/2002) (see **Annex 3**).
 - Proof of financial and economic capacity : provide the documents listed in part III – point 13.2.
 - Proof of technical and professional competence : provide the documents listed in part III – point 13.3.
 - Other substantiating documents if the candidate or tenderer cannot, for valid reasons, provide those indicated above.

11.2 Technical proposal

The technical proposal should address all the matters laid down in the specifications for the survey (see part I). The proposal should contain detailed information on the survey methodology, including geographical coverage, survey mode, sample design, weighting procedures, sample size per country, sample coverage (e.g. in terms of employment), sample representativeness at country, euro area and EU level etc. The level of detail of the tender will be important in the evaluation of the tender. Tenderers must include in their bids the technical specifications set out in part I, providing details with regard to the organisation of the survey. The technical proposal must provide, as a minimum, all the information needed for the purpose of awarding the contract.

11.3 Financial proposal

- **Prices must be quoted in euro for each year**, including for the countries which do not form part of the euro zone. For the tenderers of the countries which do not form part of the euro zone, the amount of the offer cannot be revised because of exchange rate movements. The choice of exchange rate belongs to the tenderer, who assumes the risks or opportunities associated with these exchange rate movements.
- **Prices should be quoted free of all duties, taxes and other charges, i.e. also free of VAT**, as the Communities are exempt from such charges in the EU under Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities of 8 April 1965 (OJEC L 152 of 13 July 1967). Exemption is granted to the Commission by the

governments of the Member States, either through refunds upon presentation of documentary evidence or by direct exemption.

For those countries where national legislation provides an exemption by means of a reimbursement, the amount of VAT is to be shown separately. In case of doubts about the applicable VAT system, it is the tenderer's responsibility to contact his national authorities to clarify the way in which the European Community is exempt from VAT.

- The prices must be fixed and not subject to revision, inclusive of all expenses.
- The indicative budget is fixed at **275,000.00 EUR per year.**
- The price quotation **must be signed** by the tenderer or his duly authorised representative. The price must be quoted free of all duties, taxes and other charges, including VAT, as the Communities are exempt from such charges under Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities. The amount of VAT should be shown separately.

PART III: ASSESSMENT AND AWARD OF A CONTRACT

The assessment will be based on each tenderer's bid.

All the information will be assessed in the light of the criteria set out in these specifications. The procedure for the award of the contract, which will concern only admissible bids will be carried out in three successive stages. Only bids meeting the requirements of stage one will be examined in the following stage.

The aim of each of these stages is:

- 1) To check, in the first stage (exclusion criteria), whether tenderers can take part in the tendering procedure and, where applicable, be awarded the contract (see **Annex 3**).
- 2) To check, in the second stage (selection criteria), the technical and professional capacity as well as the economic and financial capacity of each tenderer who has passed the exclusion stage (see **part III**, point 13 – selection criteria).
- 3) To assess on the basis of the award criteria each bid which has passed the exclusion and selection stages (see **part III**, point 14 - award criteria).

In the case of consortia, the exclusion, selection and award criteria will be applicable to all the members of the consortium. The same principle will also be applied in the case that there are subcontractors.

The bid must clearly identify the subcontractors and document their willingness to accept the task and thus acceptance of the terms and conditions set out in point 6.

Tenderers must inform the subcontractors that Article II.17 of the draft service contract will be applied to them.

Once the contract has been signed, Article II.13 of the above mentioned service contract shall govern subcontractors.

12. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Tenderers falling within one or more of the following categories will automatically be excluded from the tendering procedure.

Tenders will not be considered if the candidates are in any of the following situations:¹

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*;

¹ In compliance with Articles 93 and 94 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations;
- (g) they are faced with a conflict of interest;
- (h) they have been guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required or have failed to supply this information.

Tenderers or their representatives must fill in and sign the form in **Annex 3** to these specifications. By completing this form, tenderers declare on their honour they are not in one or more of the situations describe in the form.

The awarded tenderer commits himself to provide the evidence that he is not in one or more of the situations described in the form before signing the contract with the Commission.

13. SELECTION CRITERIA

Only the tenders fulfilling all the selection criteria will be examined in the light of the award criteria.

This part of the tender concerns the criteria and documents relating to the technical and professional capacity and economic and financial capacity of the service provider(s) involved in the bid. It should also contain any other document that the tenderer(s) wish(es) to include by way of clarification.

If several service providers are involved in the bid, each of them must have and show that they have a) the professional and technical capacity to perform the tasks assigned to them in the tender, and b) the required economic and financial capacity.

This rule applies to all service providers, regardless of the percentage of tasks they intend to execute, once they have chosen to be tenderers.

However, if the tender includes subcontractors whose tasks represents less than 20% of the contract, those subcontractors are not obliged to provide evidence of their economic and financial capacity.

13.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

a. Financial and economic capacity

b. Technical and professional capacity

b.1 At least 3 years proven experience in :

- Preparing and carrying out qualitative business and/or consumer surveys
- Evaluation of survey results
- Use of survey results for economic analysis

b.2 Capacity of the tenderer to complete the survey each month in due time

b.3 Geographical coverage: facilities enabling the conducting of business surveys in at least the following EU countries: Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

b.4 Capacity of the tenderer to produce high quality reports in English

13.2 Evidence of the financial and economic capacity (see selection criterion a.)

All tenderers (and subcontractors whose tasks are equal to or exceed 20% of the contract) must provide proof of economic and financial capacity by presenting the financial statements for the past three financial years.

If, for some exceptional reason which the Commission considers justified, a tenderer is unable to provide one or other of the above documents, he may prove his economic and financial capacity by any other document which the Commission considers appropriate. In any case, the Commission must at least be notified of the exceptional reason and its justification in the tender. The Commission reserves the right to request any other document enabling it to verify the tenderer's economic and financial capacity.

13.3 Evidence of the technical and professional capacity (see selection criteria b.1–b.4)

The ability of the tenderer to perform the required services will be assessed in particular with regard to their know-how, efficiency, experience and reliability.

Evidence of the technical and professional capacity of the providers involved in the tender may be provided on the basis of the following documents:

- A list of the principal services provided in the past three years, with the sums, dates and recipients, public or private; this should mean any studies, service contracts, consultancy work, surveys, publications or other work previously carried out; the most relevant of these should be attached.

- The educational and professional qualifications of the service provider and/or those of the managerial staff and, in particular, those of the persons responsible for providing the services; a curriculum vitae shall be attached for each of these persons.
- A statement of the average annual manpower and the number of managerial staff of the service provider in the last three years.
- A detailed description of the operational organisation for carrying out the survey.
- Relevant documentation regarding the qualified staff and other human resources involved in the survey.
- A description of the measures employed to ensure the quality of services, and a description of the firm's study and research facilities.
- Relevant documentation regarding the infrastructure, facilities and tools to be employed for performing the survey.
- An indication of the proportion of the contract which the service provider may intend to subcontract.

By submitting a tender, each service provider involved therein accepts the possibility of a check being carried out by the Commission on his technical capacities and, if necessary, on his study and research facilities and quality control measures.

In addition, all tenderers are informed that they may be asked to prove that they are authorised to perform the contract under national law, as evidenced by inclusion in a professional or trade register or a sworn declaration or certificate, membership of a specific organisation, express authorisation, or entry in the VAT register.

Tenderers' attention is drawn to the fact that any total or partial omission of information for which one or more service providers involved in the tender are responsible may lead the Commission to exclude the tender from the rest of the procedure.

14. AWARD CRITERIA

The contract will be awarded to the most cost-effective tender. The selected tender is assessed according to the following qualitative award criteria and the maximum scores applicable to each criterion.

The following award criteria will be applied.

No	QUALITATIVE AWARD CRITERIA	Maximum quality score
1	Degree of experience in carrying out business and consumer surveys, evaluating survey results and using survey results for economic analysis	18
2	Degree of knowledge of the specific features of the financial services sector in the countries where the survey is carried out	18
3	Quality of survey methodology including sample design, survey mode, sample size per country and sector, coverage rate, weighting scheme	23
4	The efficiency of the candidates' work organisation, in terms of flexibility, infrastructure, qualified staff and facilities of preparing the survey, carrying out the work and evaluating and reporting the results in the countries where the survey is carried out	23
5	Geographical coverage: representative results for the euro area and the EU as a whole, based on a sufficiently large number of EU Member States	18
Total quality score		100

Tenders scoring less than 50% of the maximum score for a single criterion will be excluded.

The points scored for the above qualitative criteria will be compared to the price, and the contract will be awarded to the tender which is the most cost-effective (offers the best value for money) on the basis of the following formula.

FORMULA FOR THE AWARD CRITERION

$$S = \frac{2}{3}Q' + \frac{1}{3}P'$$

where

S is the score of the offer

Q' is the relative quality score of the offer

P' is the relative price score of the offer

and

$$Q' = 100 * Q / Q_{\max}$$

with Q the total quality score of the offer

Q_{max}..... the highest quality score among all offers

and

$$P' = 100 * P_{\min} / P$$

with P..... the price of the offer

P_{min}..... the lowest price among all offers

Since assessment of the tenders will focus on the quality of the proposed services, tenders should elaborate on all points addressed by these specifications in order to score as many points as possible. The mere repetition of mandatory requirements set out in these specifications, without going into details or without giving any added value, will only result in a very low score. In addition, if certain essential points of these specifications are not expressly covered by the tender, the Commission may decide to give a zero mark for the relevant qualitative award criteria.

15. OPENING OF TENDERS

Tenders will be opened at **14h30 on 20.10.2006** at the following location:

Office address:

European Commission
Directorate General ECFIN
Room BU1 – 4/46
Avenue de Beaulieu 1
B -1160 BRUSSELS
Belgium

One **authorised representative** of each tenderer may attend the opening of the bids. Companies wishing to attend are requested to notify their intention by sending a fax or e-mail at least 48 hours in advance to the address given in the invitation letter. This notification must

be signed by an authorised officer of the tenderer and specify the name of the person who will attend the opening of the bids on the tenderer's behalf.

16. AWARD COMMITTEE

The process of awarding will take place in November/December 2006. An awarding committee is to be set up for this purpose.

17. INFORMATION FOR TENDERERS

The Commission will inform tenderers of decisions reached concerning the award of the contract, including the grounds for any decision not to award a contract or to recommence the procedure.