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Committee on Government Procurement

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

Response by Norway

The attached communication contains the replies from the delegation of Norway to the questionnaire on Information Technology in Government Procurement contained in document GPA/W/24, dated 22 August 1996.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. *Could delegations give a brief description of any steps taken or planned to introduce information technology into public procurement? If so, does this cover contracts which are covered under the 1994 Agreement? At all levels of government?*

Public entities can purchase programs for filling in tender notices electronically. Electronic transmission of notices to the Norwegian gazette and to the EC Publication Office in Luxembourg is being planned. Norway also participates in the SIMAP project under the European Communities.

All Norwegian Agreement-covered tender notices are available on the TED (Tenders Electronic Daily) database of the European Communities. The TED database is the electronic version of the Official Journal Supplement S of the European Communities. This database can be accessed by firms directly, or through specialized consultants who offer monitoring of TED for companies.

The Norwegian government gazette, Norsk lysingsblad, appears every Friday on the Internet. It is compulsory for state entities to publish in this gazette, and all these notices are found in the electronic version. Most of the municipalities and counties also publish their procurement above the WTO-GPA threshold values in this gazette. Short versions of all the notices in the European Communities TED database are also available through this Internet address.

An English-Norwegian CPV dictionary will be available on disk next year.

2. *What function(s) would information technology serve in such systems and who will be the users?*

The Internet version of the government gazette is meant for companies of any size. Electronic access to TED and the government gazette gives interested suppliers quicker and more easily available information than paper-based versions regarding notices for public contracts.

3. *Could delegations describe the technical aspects of the systems in use or planned? In particular as regards infrastructure/hardware-software and its options/standards?*

The government gazette is available for everybody with an Internet connection. TED can be accessed by special programs designed for this purpose.

4. *Could delegations describe any limitations affecting access to information available and use of systems? How wide is potential access to interested suppliers? What are the access possibilities for suppliers of other signatory countries? What possible obstacles to access might arise for suppliers in other signatory countries?*

The information in the government gazette is available for all suppliers with an Internet connection. The text in the government gazette is in Norwegian. Access to TED is more complicated and usually done by specialized firms.

5. *For those Parties who use databases which list government procurement opportunities:*

(i) *What are the names of their databases?*

The Internet address of the government gazette is: <http://norsk.lysingsblad.no/>

(ii) *How long have the databases been operational and how many suppliers use the databases?*

The government gazette on Internet started as a pilot project on 1 July 1996, ending 31 December this year. It is planned to become permanent in 1997. It is not known how many interested suppliers have accessed this database. Regarding the TED database, there are approximately 10 consultants that monitor the database on behalf of interested suppliers in Norway and Sweden.

(iii) *Is a fee charged to suppliers using the system?*

Not yet, but perhaps in 1997.

(iv) *Can suppliers obtain tender documentation electronically? If so, how?*

In some cases only, but it is becoming increasingly common. The Government Administration Services offer tender documentation electronically in connection with framework agreements. Very often documentation is sent by facsimile.

(v) *How is information on the databases organized?*

Weekly in the government gazette on Internet. In TED according to the type of tender notice (contract awards, services notices etc.).

(vi) *Do the databases offer any other features?*

The government gazette also contains articles related to public procurement of interest to suppliers.

(vii) *What is the approximate number of procurement opportunities listed on the databases annually?*

Approximately 2,500 Norwegian tender notices will be published in TED in 1996. In the government gazette there will be approximately 2,000 notices.

(viii) *Are the systems managed by the government or a private company?*

The government gazette on Internet is managed by the Government Administration Services. The TED database is managed by the Publication Office of the European Communities.

(ix) *Can Parties' databases be interrogated using international standards, such as SQL - Standard Query Language?*

No, not for the government gazette.

- (x) *Are all notices which are required to be published under Articles IX and XVIII:1 of the Agreement - for entities in Annexes 1, 2 and 3 - also available on databases? If so, do such notices contain at least the minimum information required to be published under Articles IX and XVIII:1?*

Yes, either in the government gazette or through TED or in both databases.

- (xi) *How are Agreement-covered notices identified?*

Almost all the Norwegian notices that appear in TED will be covered by the GPA. Only in a few cases entities publish notices in TED for supplies, services or works that are below the GPA threshold values. In the government gazette, there will be notices for state procurement which are not covered by the GPA. Whether the notices in the government gazette are covered by the GPA or not, suppliers will have to estimate when they read the notices. Suppliers can also contact the entities to enquire whether a procurement is covered by the GPA or not.

- (xii) *To what extent does each type of notice contained in databases conform to a standard structure?*

Both in TED and in the government gazette there is a standard layout for notices.

- (xiii) *Is any particular classification used in such notices to describe purchases and, if so, what classification?*

All Agreement-covered notices are described by the CPV nomenclature.

- (xiv) *Where databases exist in a non-WTO language, to what extent are notices and information summarized in a WTO language?*

All Norwegian tender notices appear in TED in an EC language. Almost all of these notices appear in English.

6. *For those Parties who are involved in action in the area of electronic commerce:*

- (i) *Please provide full information on projects and plans with regard to electronic commerce.*

EDIRAM is a pilot project on electronic exchange of information between public purchasers and suppliers in the process of putting framework agreements into operational work. The purchaser shall be able to order goods by electronic mail, and the suppliers to return invoices as well as other relevant information in demand to the purchasers (GPA/IC/W/7/Add.6/Suppl.1). This project is operational on a small scale and will be extended in 1997. The EDIRAM project will be succeeded by other projects on electronic commerce and payment. In these projects, Norway uses the EC's EDIFACT standard.

- (ii) *Could those Parties who have experience with electronic commerce provide information on such experiences?*

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