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## **Five-step guidance helps achieving best value for public money as well as wider economic benefits**

*The EFCA guidance on how to derive and use quality criteria in public procurement proposes a methodology for clarifying goals and determining quality criteria.*

The 2014 EU procurement directives enable greater use of quality criteria when awarding public contracts. Heavy reliance on price as the predominant award criteria in former public procurement rules had the unfortunate effect of frequently limiting innovation and encouraging short-term thinking – neither of which favour the best solutions to today's problems.

Although it is still possible to base an award solely on price, the European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations (EFCA) strongly recommends that contracting authorities use the 'most economically advantaged tender' (MEAT) – employing criteria other than, or in addition to, price.

The challenge remains the way the MEAT criterion is used as old habits on the side of public procurers of using the lowest price criterion to circumvent subsequent criticism die hard.

'Because determining the quality criteria is not always straight forward', said Jaap de Koning, Chair of EFCA's Internal Market Committee, 'the guidelines describe a pan European and proven methodology when drawing up appropriate criteria for the contract award.'

'Price and cost are two different things. Price is meaningless; you can have a higher price at the start, but it may serve to lower costs over the lifetime of a construction. When working on price only, it is more than certain that the product, whether it is a road, or a building, or a whole infrastructure, will not be designed the optimum way.'

The EFCA guidelines focus on selecting the 'most economically advantaged tender', i.e. the second stage of the procurement process relating to the (technical and economic) project proposals rather than the companies' capabilities.

### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

The EFCA guidance 'How to derive MEAT criteria' is available from the website: [www.efcanet.org](http://www.efcanet.org).

EFCA has member associations in 28 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 – [www.efcanet.org](http://www.efcanet.org)  
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