



European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry



# **EFCI's RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY-BASED PROCUREMENT OF CLEANING SERVICES**

*The cleaning and facility services sector is one of the largest service industries in Europe, made up of over 290,000 companies employing more than 4.2 million people. With employment steadily increasing (+14.8 % in the period 2013-2018) the sector is contributing directly to Europe's economic and social growth.*

*Our sector provides essential services to both public and private buyers who often select their contractors through public tenders. Consequently, public procurement has a significant role to play in the economy of the cleaning and facility services industry: in some countries contracts awarded in this way account for 50% of the sector turnover.*

## THE EFCI STRONGLY ADVOCATES, TOGETHER WITH ITS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE EBSA, FOR:

- ▶ Encouraging procurement procedures that focus on **quality criteria**;
- ▶ Using public and private procurement to move **towards quality enhancement in services tendering**.
- ▶ Respecting **collective agreements and the requirements of different sectors**;
- ▶ **Professionalisation** of procurers;
- ▶ Facilitating **participation of SMEs** in tenders;
- ▶ Promoting the **value of outsourcing** to ensure the quality of services.

## I. THE BENEFITS OF PROCURING CLEANING SERVICES: THE VALUE OF OUTSOURCING

Quality professional cleaning services are key in allowing institutions and businesses to fulfil their **legal obligations to ensure the health and safety** of their premises and to take care of their facilities in order to avoid unnecessary maintenance costs.

Outsourcing cleaning services allows organisations to **focus on their main activity** and ensures that **specialised and trained professionals** maintain high cleaning and hygiene standards in their premises. Cleaning companies are best equipped to analyse and design the best cleaning routines and techniques adapted to the clients' needs.

Not only are cleaning standards likely to be superior but the client also avoids the sizable costs of recruiting, screening, hiring, training and managing employees, as well as of purchasing and storing cleaning products and equipment.

## II. SELECTING CLEANING SERVICES ON THE BASIS OF QUALITY: HOW AND WHY

Before selecting a cleaning services provider, it is important to evaluate the specific needs of your organisation. Consulting various users and investigating the **'need behind the need'** is the first step in establishing the right criteria by which a provider will be chosen. Being clear on what is required at a technical and organisational level will be vital in order to correctly assess whether the expertise of a cleaning company matches up to the requirements.

**In the case of the procurement of cleaning services, it is important to keep in mind that:**

- ▶ Cleaning is a highly labour-intensive service **where labour accounts for around 85% of the total costs**. This means that pressure on price will have direct consequences on staffing, the knowledge and expertise of teams, the rest of the costs and the relevance given to innovation and sustainability aspects.
- ▶ As such, it is essential to shift the focus from price-alone criteria to **a choice based on the best price/quality ratio**.

To ensure that from the design of the tender to the award of the contract **you are selecting quality services** we recommend following the principles outlined in this leaflet. Here you can see, at a glance, the most relevant principles which have been taken from the Selecting Best Value Guide and EFCI's members' specific recommendations.

## III. THE SELECTING BEST VALUE GUIDE

The Selecting Best Value Guide is a tool for **private and public organisations awarding** contracts for cleaning services, within the EU. The Best Value Guide was jointly developed by UNI Europa and the EFCI through the European Social Dialogue and financed by the European Commission. Originally developed in 2014, the Guide was revised in 2017 and is available in 12 languages on the [Selecting Best Value website](#).

**It highlights the benefits of choosing quality services in the procurement process by:**

- ▶ Defining what it is to choose "best value" in the selection of cleaning services providers;
- ▶ Presenting the current European legislative framework;
- ▶ Providing technical advice to help buyers evaluate the cost of a service and rank tenders (including a tender-organising tool, evaluation guidelines and an interactive tool to simulate the preparation of a tender).



<sup>1</sup>The cleaning industry in Europe - EFCI's report 2020. Available [here](#)

#### IV. EFCI'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY-BASED PROCUREMENT OF CLEANING SERVICES

Building on those principles, the EFCI makes the following key recommendations regarding the procurement of cleaning services in order to base all phases and steps of the public procurement procedure (from planning to selection, award and implementation) on the principle of the "best value" rather than the "lowest price". The steps below should be followed as a bare minimum by organisations who want to apply Best Value principles, to their selection procedures and who may even wish to go further in their aim of seeking out the best price/quality ratio.

##### Preparation as key for successful tenders and execution

It is very important to **work in partnership with cleaning companies throughout the procurement process, building constructive relationships** whilst at the same time maintaining a level playing field among bidders in a way that ensures compliance with the principles of transparency and equal treatment. During the preparatory phase this can be achieved by conducting **market analysis**. In this regard the EFCI recommends:

- ▶ **Conducting market research** by **contacting the relevant national industrial cleaning federation** to get assistance and advice from an objective partner. National associations have dedicated specialists and guides to assist buyers in the preparation of tenders (see EFCI members' contact references).
- ▶ **Conducting a preliminary market consultation** by interviewing candidates and contacting all other relevant market stakeholders in order to better prepare the procurement procedure by:
  - informing cleaning companies about the planned procurement;
  - asking for their input on the requirements to be met and the selection and award criteria which are likely to be applied in the procurement process;
  - conducting an external referral before the publication of the contract notice: buyers may send out the draft procurement documentation in order to obtain further comments from the market.

##### Price and award criteria

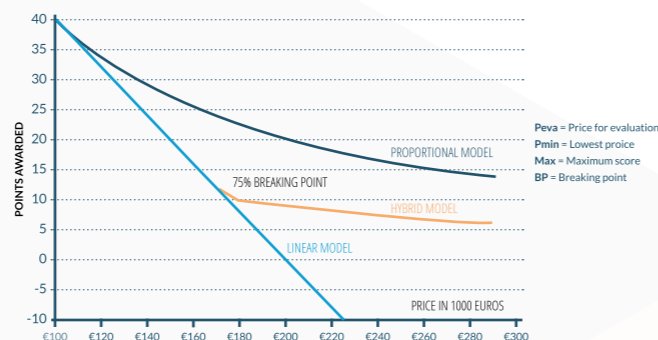
For the award criteria, the EFCI encourages contracting authorities to move from the 'price-only' criteria to the **'MEAT' criteria** (most economically advantageous tender) within a **'best price quality ratio'** approach. In the awarding stage, public buyers should ensure that **bids are not assessed on price alone but rather enable competition on the basis of other technical and quality criteria**. In particular, we recommend that:

- ▶ **price contributes less than 50%** of the overall offer proposal score;
- ▶ particular attention is dedicated to **rejecting abnormally low tenders (ALT)**;
- ▶ price offers are evaluated through the **"proportional model"** and its corresponding scoring formula used to rank the tender.

$$\text{Score} = \frac{P_{\min}}{P_{\text{eva}}} \times \text{Max}$$

##### By applying the proportional model:

- ▶ The difference in points becomes smaller the higher the price difference is;
- ▶ A clearer distinction is obtained among offers that lie much higher than the lowest price (e.g. a price that is 100% higher than the lowest, still scores half points).



##### Avoid using number of hours as a scoring criterion

We recommend that buyers not use the number of hours as a scoring criterion: a cleaning contract is a results-based and not an activity-based of contract (products vs. services approach).

- ▶ Using the number of hours as a scoring criterion in the tender would result in putting the buyer of cleaning services in a position similar to that of a direct employer in certain situations.

##### Improve the balance of other scoring criteria

The EFCI recommends contracting authorities and buyers of cleaning services also take the following aspects into account when setting the award criteria or the contract performance conditions:

- ▶ **Organisation of the execution of the contract:** in order to ensure quality control throughout the life of the contract, we suggest:
  - requesting a description of methods and policies used to verify quality routines and confirmation that quality standards are being reached (e.g. ISO certificates) and
  - including specifications of contract management, operational planning and relationship with the client in the tender and in the contract.
- ▶ **Qualification and experience of staff:** references should have been made in the tender about the experience and qualifications of the staff who will be carrying out the cleaning services requested (including references to training and/or skills);
- ▶ **Environmental sustainability of the service:** tenders can make reference to environmental management systems (national, European or international, such as ISO 14001 or equivalent), material and products used (requesting environmental or other equivalent certifications, ensuring efficient use of natural resources as well as reduced use of chemicals and disinfectants where possible), training of personnel in eco-gestures and others, as well as to the impact of transportation of personnel, cleaning material and products.
- ▶ **GPP criteria:** contracting authorities can use specific provisions to work towards strategic environmental goals, such as green public procurement (GPP). The EFCI recommends including such provisions:
  - only if price is worth less than 50% of the overall score (within a 'best price quality ratio' approach);
  - in the conditions related to the way the contract is carried out (execution criteria) and as a horizontal obligation for all bidders;
  - through an evaluation of offers carried out solely on the basis of the criteria set in the tenders, as established by the **2014 Directive**, and not on external elements linked to the general CSR policy of contracting companies (i.e. being included in the tender or not being taken into account at all).

- ▶ **Innovative operational solutions in the offer of service** (or "organisational innovation"): the EFCI recommends **assessing innovation in cleaning services by adapting the chosen scoring formula to the priced Bill of Quantities** (in French, *DQE: détail quantitatif estimatif*).

For this, the following need to be taken into account: (i) daytime cleaning, (ii) technical innovation (e.g. new materials, machines, cleaning techniques, sensors), (iii) environmental innovation (e.g. new products, modes of transport, intervention times according to energy efficiency, (iv) communication and digital innovation (digital platforms, customer relations, service monitoring, etc.).

##### Including daytime cleaning in the execution criteria

Retaining daytime cleaning in the execution criteria would have immediate positive consequences on the work-life balance of cleaning agents and on the overall recognition of the services by those working or using the premises in which the cleaning service is being carried out. More specifically:

- ▶ increasing daytime cleaning results in diminishing split hours (i.e. non-split-up working time);
- ▶ in the event of a contract renewal, a prior study should be conducted to evaluate the possibility of implementing daytime cleaning according to the new site configurations.

##### Transfer of undertakings (TUPE)

Cleaning services contracts are subject to the transfer of undertakings legislation, which establishes that the incoming company must take over the personnel of the outgoing company in case of change of contractor. Consequently,

- ▶ given that labour costs amount on average to 80% of the price quoted in the offers of cleaning companies, **it is fundamental that the tender notice includes information on the personnel to be taken over** in the event of a transfer of undertakings (labour costs and corresponding hours per unit prices);
- ▶ this is a legal obligation which is very often not respected by public buyers. The EFCI considers that all requirements resulting from this obligation must be considered by the buyers in the drafting of the tender's labour clauses, especially regarding social integration.

## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact the EFCI Secretariat



secretariat@efci.eu

## REFERENCE MATERIAL DEVELOPED BY THE EFCI AND ITS MEMBERS:

- ▶ **"Selecting Best Value" Guide**, developed by the EFCI and UNI Europa with the support of the European Commission at [this link](#).
- ▶ **ABSU/UGBN (BE), 2019** "Le contrôle des prix dans les marchés publics dans le secteur du nettoyage - Manuel de l'UGBN". Available in French at [this link](#).
- ▶ **ALMEGA (SE), 2018**: "Procurement of Cleaning Services" by Almega Cleaning Companies and Swedish labour unions Fastighets and Kommunal. Available in Swedish [this link](#).
- ▶ **FEP (FR), 2020**: Dedicated Website: [www.achat-proprete.com](http://www.achat-proprete.com)

## CONTACT DETAILS OF RELEVANT NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CLEANING FEDERATIONS:

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## Who is the EFCI?

The EFCI is the voice of the European cleaning and facility services industry. The Federation is the recognized employer's organization and European Social Partner at industrial sectoral level.



**283.000**  
companies



**4 million**  
people employed



**120.000**  
billion turnover

### EFCI's core objectives are:

- To communicate the industry's needs and priorities to the policy makers at European level and in the European Social Dialogue.
- To promote the industry and enhance the sector's competitiveness and image.
- To foster the exchange of information among EFCI's members and to facilitate capacity building.
- To organize and implement actions and projects at European level.



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