

The European contract catering sector calls for improved rules on award criteria, abnormally low tenders and public-public cooperation exemptions.

Brussels, 5 March 2013 – Today FoodServiceEurope, formerly the European Federation of Contract Catering Organisations (FERCO), held its third Food Service Roundtable to discuss the ongoing public procurement reform with decision makers from the three EU institutions. The event, hosted by IMCO coordinator Toine Manders MEP (ALDE), took place in the European Parliament and brought together senior business managers of Europe’s leading contract catering companies Compass, Elior, ISS, Sodexo and Trivalor and national contract catering associations.

Following the European Parliament’s decision to enter into trilogue negotiations, the contract catering industry proposes 4 key actions to ensure the quality and value of food services provided through public procurement. *“It is a crucial moment for public procurement. We have to take this opportunity to ensure the best value for money in public procurement and the best possible conditions for the provision of high quality services,”* said Rocco Renaldi, FoodServiceEurope Secretary General.

“If we are serious about promoting nutrition, health and sustainability we have to recognise the key role of public procurement. The contract catering sector stands ready to play its part, but it needs a strong and ambitious EU legal framework to enable operators to compete on quality for the provision of the six billion meals it serves to Europeans every year, in hospitals, schools and care homes among other settings,” Mr. Renaldi underlined.

For this purpose, FoodServiceEurope calls for:

- (i) The adoption of an adequate definition of the MEAT criterion that mandates the inclusion of quality criteria, beyond price alone.**
- (ii) The inclusion of an objective definition of abnormally low tenders that would bring legal certainty and increased effectiveness to the very much welcomed obligation on contracting authorities to request additional explanations on abnormally low tenders;**
- (iii) A narrow definition of the public-public cooperation exemption, in order to give private enterprises fair and equal access to public contracts, thus avoiding distortions to competition in the Internal Market.**
- (iv) The inclusion of the contract catering sector under the full scope of the Directive, as proposed by the Commission and supported by IMCO.**

“We call on the EU to look at public procurement legislation as a strategic policy tool,” said Norbert Hummel, FoodServiceEurope President, “Europe faces two overarching challenges: redressing public finances and creating sustainable growth. Public procurement can help Europe get closer to meeting both, through efficient use of public money and the provision of quality services. But for this we need the right legal framework – one that opens up the sector, enables fair competition between and among public and private entities, and one that underpins quality, not a race to the bottom.”

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Note to the Editor:

FoodServiceEurope, formerly the European Federation of Contract Catering Organisations (FERCO) brings together the national contract catering associations from different EU Member States and leading contract catering companies, representing four fifths of the EU market.

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