Public procurement in the European Union: exploring the way forward. Green paper

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OBJECTIVE: this Green Paper is intended to provide a framework for a wide-ranging debate on public procurement in the European Union. SUBSTANCE: every year the European Union's public authorities and service undertakings spend about ECU 720 billion buying goods and services, i.e. 11% of EU gross domestic product. In this context the Commission document stresses the need for an effective public procurement policy which is fundamental to the success of the single market as a whole. The legal framework for open and competitive public procurement is in position, but its implementation in the Member States is partial and incomplete and the economic impact is relatively slight. To improve the situation in these two areas the Commission invites all interested parties (EU institutions, trade associations, contracting entities and suppliers) to respond in writing before 31 March 1997. On the basis of the contributions the Commission intends to organize a hearing and to draw up a communication on public procurement. The topics dealt with in the Green Paper are: 1) the transposition and effective implementation of the legislation: greater efforts must be made in this field so that all operators in the Union can participate on equal terms in the public procurement market; 2) the means of improving access to the market through information and training and through electronic tendering; 3) how the correct application of public procurement rules can be linked to the implementation of other Community policies, in particular those relating to SMEs, standards, trans-European networks, the Cohesion and Structural Funds, public procurement by European institutions, social aspects, the environment and defence. On this last point the Commission confirms its willingness to consider any move to introduce more competition into defence procurement; 4) access to procurement markets in other countries: the entry into force of a new WTO government procurement agreement (GPA) opens up a considerable number of new markets in third countries for EU companies. The Green Paper calls on all the interested parties to provide information on any problems arising in these markets. It also stresses the need to help the CEEC associated countries and the Mediterranean countries to develop their public procurement procedures.