

QSAR toolbox – 2013 procurement plan update

Meeting of the Management Board 21-22 March 2013

Item	19
Action	For adoption
Status	Final

Action requested

The Management Board is invited to approve a procurement action of the Agency, and to thereby amend the Procurement Plan of ECHA for 2013 in order to allow for an open call for tenders to procure consulting services for the development of phase 3 of the QSAR toolbox, establishing thereby the financing decision for the contract.

Background

The Procurement Plan of ECHA for 2013 was, as approved by the Management Board as Annex 4 to the Work Programme 2013 (WP) at the meeting of December 2012. The text of the WP foresees that ECHA will continue contributing to the maintenance and the further development of the OECD QSAR Toolbox.

Since the call for tenders described below was not originally included in the procurement plan for 2013, the approval of this procurement action is requested now in order to obtain a financing decision for the contract.

Matters for consideration

1. In accordance the EU Financial Regulation public contracts¹, under operating appropriations, must be covered by a Financing decision. The approval by the Board of the yearly procurement plan of the Agency with sufficiently detailed information about the foreseen contracts constitutes the financing decision for the given contracts. If the need for a contract only becomes apparent later, the plan must be amended or an *ad hoc* financing decision must be adopted;
2. The Board approved in the relevant section of the WP 2013 (Activity 11 International Cooperation) that ECHA will continue contributing to the maintenance and the further development of the OECD QSAR Toolbox. This work is pivotal for supporting registrants of the last registration deadline of May 2018;
3. The 2013 procurement plan of ECHA as approved by the Board includes, under Activity 11 International Cooperation, Sub-Activity 11.1 Coordination of International Relations, several actions related to the QSAR toolbox regarding maintenance, the software code review, and the gathering of scientific input to establish the way forward. The plan does not include, however, the procurement of consulting services for the development of phase 3 of the QSAR toolbox.
4. As a result of discussion with the OECD it is proposed to organise Phase 3 of the Toolbox development in the form of a multiannual framework contract with one service provider, where each work package will be addressed separately by specific contracts. This approach will allow ECHA and OECD higher flexibility in prioritising

¹ Article 84(2)

and scoping the scientific and technical tasks which shall be addressed during the Phase 3 development. This is of paramount importance for upgrading the Toolbox in line with the needs for the 2018 deadline.

OECD and ECHA have estimated that, in order to cover the tasks foreseen in Phase 3, about 6 years of development will be required, with the release of intermediate versions especially to provide the needed functionality for the 2018 deadline. Due to the high complexity of the software, both in terms of IT structure and functionality leading to a high learning curve to be able to gain the scientific expertise in the field and apply it into the software development), all tasks foreseen for Phase 3 development shall best be performed by one contractor or consortium. Therefore it is strongly recommended to set the duration of the Framework contract for 4+2 years. This way ECHA will assure that the Toolbox will be under development/maintenance before the last registration deadline and that all scientific/technical tasks might be achieved without time and resource consuming handover in the meantime.

The call for tenders is expected to be launched during Q2 of 2013 and the contract signature is foreseen by the end of the current year. The overall value of the contract is estimated to be 2 million Euros, and has been foreseen in the multiannual financial fiche of the Agency up to 2018.