eTenders Software Release Notes
06 February 2024

Oifig um Sholáthar Rialtais
Office of Government Procurement

Contents

# eTenders Software Release notes – *February 2024*

This document describes software and functionality enhancements that are now available following the deployment of this software update. None of the current features or changes in this release have any impact on the pre-existing functionality if not mentioned explicitly in these release notes and training may thus be done post-release if desired.

1. *Support for Qualification Systems*

In the existing system, for QS system, after selection of the Utilities Directive (in CfT/DPS creation), the system allows the publication of the respective notice to the OJEU. For the QS, Contracting Authority User may decide to use either DPS or FA created under (Utility Directive).

Users wanted the implementation of a specific QS functionality that is separated from the DPS and that is implemented in slightly different manner.

To achieve this, eTenders will support a new separate **QS procedure** (to be created from the left menu below and then QS created to appear on the list in the right below), which will operate in a similar manner as the existing DPS functionality, but with a few changes described hereunder.
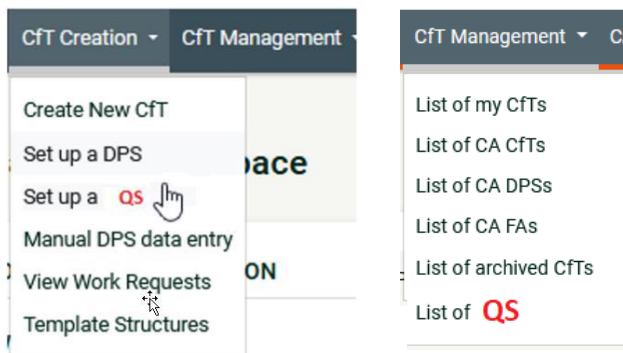
Upon Selection of the procedure, the fields will be similar to the Create DPS fields, except the following:

– Directive will be 2014/25/EU, **preselected** and **greyed-out** (not editable for the user)
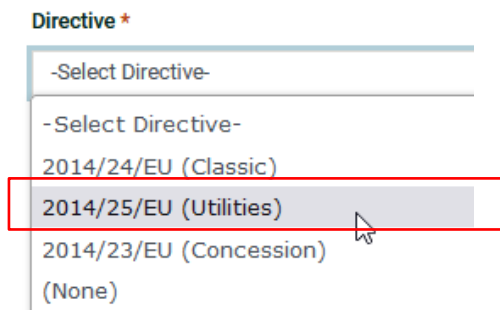
After **QS** creation, the same Tasks and functionality as for DPS will apply and remain (**Associated users**, **Define TS**, **possibility to add ESPD**).

For the **QS,** the Tender Structure will also include only 1 envelope in the 1st phase (eligibility-only exactly as supported now).

The POTC will not define the Workflow for the QS as by default only the **all online** will be supported **(as for DPS)**. For Specific Contracts under the QS, the POTC will also not define the workflow, which will be set to **online/ online/ offline**.
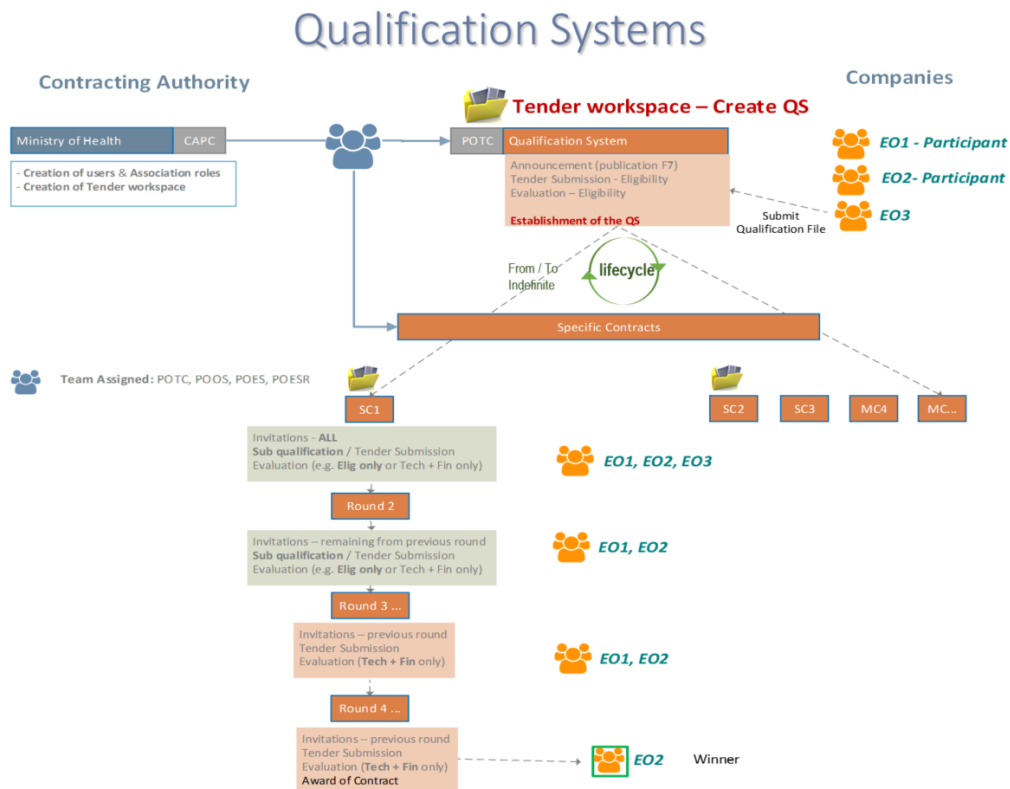
Tenders arising from a QS will support multiple rounds of eligibility envelopes and also multiple rounds of Technical + Financial envelopes, as described in the above figure.

Upon selecting Task to **Establish the QS,** the following will be displayed, where the following will be changed:

- Duration will be **1) Start From / To Dates + Time** or **2) Indefinite** (selection of 1 or 2 is mandatory. If 2 is selected, then no need for start date + time and the QS will be active as soon as established. When QS is published on eTenders, then the QS become active. This selection cannot be changed after the QS is established.
- "Terminate QS" will work like the current functionality "Terminate DPS" and will be available for both above options (specific or indefinite duration). After this task, the system will allow the creation and publication of a cancellation notice. All associated users (buyers and suppliers) will receive a system notification when the "Terminate QS" action is executed. If the participants need to be notified in advance, then this will be done manually or offline.
- The CPB functionality will remain, optional (like the DPS). POTC will be able to select other CAs to participate in the QS, and create their own competitions. User can choose to use this or not.
- Total **contract awarded value** is unknown at the time of establishing the QS and thus this data will be **removed completely**. The cumulative value functionality (alerts and calculations), that is available in a DPS, will not be available in a QS.
- The CPB (Central Purchasing Body) functionality will be available (but optional) and will operate in the same way as for the DPS.

After **Establishing the QS** workspace, the user will receive the **Publish notice** task then **Create notice**, which will support only the following TED **EFORM F15** under **Directive 25** only, for Qualification System Utilities. Only **EFORMS** will be supported for QS.

All data fields of the **QS form** will be pre-filled in same manner as with other **EFORM** created for a DPS, with the exception of the following duration field **BG-36 / BT-538** (equivalent of Section II.2.8 of a F7 shown in the screen copied below) that will be pre-filled from the data introduced above (e.g. unlimited).

After publication of notice and submissions of eligibility envelopes by the companies for the QS (as in the DPS), the associated CA user will get **Evaluate Submissions** task and upon successful evaluation can approve the participants.

A new page will be added, accessible from the QS menu (Show CfT menu). In this page, the full list of suppliers who have submitted a tender will be shown. The text "Evaluated" will be shown next to the organisation name if this tender has been already evaluated, and "Not evaluated" will be shown if this tender has not been evaluated yet.

After the **QS** is established, the CA user (CAPC / CAPCA) can create a new SC (Specific Contract) in the QS. The difference will be that each Specific contract will run **following the flow of a negotiated procedure**.

Under the **Specific Contract** (SC), the QS procedure will follow the rules listed below:

- o **Rule 1**: Workflow for the SC under a QS is always online/ online /offline.
- o **Rule 2**: in a SC, only the suppliers that are invited in a round can continue to the next.
- o **Rule 3**: in a SC, only suppliers invited to the last round can be awarded.
- o **Rule 4**: in a SC, upon start of a round, the POTC user chooses **Award** or **New cycle** (in such case only the 2 following options are available):
  - Eligibility only or
  - Technical and Financial
- o **Rule 5**: in a SC, after a **Technical-and-Financial** round is selected, then all subsequent rounds will also be **Technical-and-Financial**.

Under the SC, this negotiated procedure should be able to support multiple rounds of "**Eligibility-only**" cycles, followed by multiple rounds of "Technical and Financial" cycles. Each time the PO/TC user starts a new cycle, (**including the initial creation of the Specific Contract**), the user can decide if this cycle will be **Eligibility-only**, or **Technical and Financial**. Once the POTC selected to start a Technical and Financial round, then all subsequent cycles/rounds will also be Technical and Financial only.

For Specific Contracts under the QS, the POTC will not define the workflow, which will be set to online/ online/ offline.

The Specific Contract will require a user to define a Tender Structure (including either an Eligibility envelope only or a technical and Financial envelope only, as mentioned above), then to send invitation to all companies in the **QS**.

If the QS is divided into lots/categories, then each Specific Contract is created in one lot/category only, and only suppliers that are qualified under this lot/category are available to be invited. This will operate in the same manner as lots operate now in a DPS.

These invited companies will then submit tenders, be evaluated (and obtain a score or be failed during the evaluation cycle /round).

Then for this SC, the POTC can launch another round (defining if this will be an **Eligibility** envelope only or a **Technical and Financial** envelope only, depending what the POTC did in the previous round as per **Rule 5**) of submission / evaluation (in that case only the successfully evaluated companies will remain and can be invited in the next negotiation round).

This process can be repeated through multiple rounds in order to filter down the number of companies that can be invited and remain in the next round (of submission/ evaluation). There is no need to define the max number of rounds upfront, as user decide it during the process.

The "Announce Evaluation Results" email, is available (but optional, for the PO/TC for the SC) in each round, and is only sent to the companies that participated in the specific round.

At the end of the process the CA user (POTC) must prepare a **Result EFORM** (either F30 or F34) notice for the awarded SC.

2. Support messaging for SC within a DPS and QS (instead of clarifications)

Online/Manual DPS: messaging is available in parent DPS workspace, but messaging is **NOT available** in children SCs. In children SCs **clarification** functionality is available (this is slightly different from the messaging functionality).

The eTenders platform will now support the **messaging** functionality in SCs of a DPS, under the following important conditions.

1. **For new DPS**, as soon as the new release is delivered**, all DPS newly created ONLY** (that is DPS workspace created on the production environment after the release is deployed) will have this messaging only functionality for the parent DPS and also for the children SCs (no **clarification** functionality will be available anymore for these n**ew DPS** and **new SC**).

2. **Old DPS** workspaces that were created before the new release is deployed and that existed in the system will operate slightly differently. That is, for these **DPS**, the **messaging + clarifications** is available in the parent DPS workspace:
   a. **messaging + Clarifications** is **available** only for the children SCs that already exist (prior to release deployment), while
   b. for **new SCs only messaging** will be available.

3. **For QS**, as soon as the new release is delivered, **all QS newly created** (that is QS created either manually or online, after the release is deployed) will benefit and have this messaging functionality for the parent QS and also for the children SCs.

3. Manual Qualification Systems

Manual QS will be created using the Manual DPS as a template.

The buyer will create a Manual QS directly from the Create CfT menu. During the manual QS creation, the buyer will select the suppliers that have already been successful and participate in the QS. These suppliers will be eligible to participate in Specific Contracts under the QS, without taking any additional action.

The manual QS will be established in the same manner as the live QS. The same page and fields will be available, including support for CPB (adding other CAs as participants).

Messaging, Documents section, Expression of Interest will be included in the **Manual QS.**

New suppliers that want to participate to the manual QS, after it has been established, will be able to express their interest, download the documents, and submit their request to qualify/participate through the messaging. The buyer will evaluate this offline, and if the supplier qualifies, the buyer will then add the supplier to the QS, by editing the QS details page.

No tender option will be available on the manual QS (first stage).

After the manual QS is established, the buyers will be able to create Specific Contracts under the QS, and all suppliers that are included in the QS details, will be eligible to be invited. These Specific Contracts will be the same as in the live QS.

4. ESPD Part III.B – Customisation to operational functionality

Since the Office of Government Procurement launched the ESPD module in 2018, there have been a number of updates to the ESPD standard introduced by the EU Commission.

The new eTenders platform is utilising a later version of the ESPD standard upon which some changes were applied to Part III.B of the ESPD and how it operates. Subsequently, the questions in this part of the ESPD now requires the inclusion of threshold information.

This requirement is not applicable in an Irish context so the following amendments have been introduced to allow users to interact with these questions in the correct manner.

On the **ESPD request** that the buyer user defines on the Online Tender structure, Part III B is to remain mandatory (ticked and not editable), but the extra fields "threshold", "currency" and "additional information", are to become optional. This will allow the buyer to decide if these are applicable or not. The three fields will be considered a set, thus if one is filled in, the other two need to be filled in as well (e.g. you cannot provide a threshold, without specifying currency and additional information, and vice versa).

The following text will be inserted in between Part III A and Part III B:

> *"In relation to the questions in Part III B, Contracting Authorities should bypass the fields Threshold, Currency and Additional Information.*
> *Economic Operators will still be required to answer Yes or No to these questions in their ESPD Response."*

When the buyer creates the ESPD request, the buyer will decide if the "threshold", "currency" and "additional information" will be used or not:

1. If these fields are filled in when the buyer creates the ESPD request, then the supplier will see the same fields as now:

The same will apply to both fields under section B "Grounds relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions": "Payment of taxes" and "Payment of social security".

2. If these 3 fields are **not filled in** when the buyer creates the ESPD request, then the **"My replies are in accordance with the specific requirements"** section (highlighted in the screenshot below), will be removed completely, and the rest of the fields will remain as is.

The same will apply to both fields under section B "Grounds relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions": "Payment of taxes" and "Payment of social security".

5. *Offline evaluation – include original filename in the printer friendly report available to the buyer*

When we have an Offline evaluation (workflow "offline – online – offline" or "online – online – offline"), the PO/ESR user has access to the "Printer-friendly tender" report.

This report will be enhanced to include the original filename of the files attached by the supplier, and the corresponding UUID assigned to the file by the system.

6. *Notice Search and Latest Notices to include eForms notices*

The Notice search engine has been updated to include eForms notices, which have replaced the old V2.09 standard since October 2023.

With this enhancement, users can now search for all notices in the eForms standard.

After the introduction of eForms in October2023, as eForms introduce many new notices (new names, new form number and new types), the following should be implemented in the search.

1. The relevant notices will be added as options in the "Notice Type" drop-down field available in the Search for notice functionality (**PINs**, **VEAT**, **CAN** and **Modification** notices), and returned by the search in the results.

2. The relevant notices will be returned as results in the "Latest Notices" page (**PIN**, **VEAT** and **CANs**).

7. *Ability to create standalone CAN and VEAT in the CA notices section*

Prior to this software release, the VEAT and CAN notices could only be created under a CfT and following the CfT flow. Additionally, within the CA notices page, the user could only add PINs as a standalone option.

In the CA notices page, a buyer can create only PIN notices.
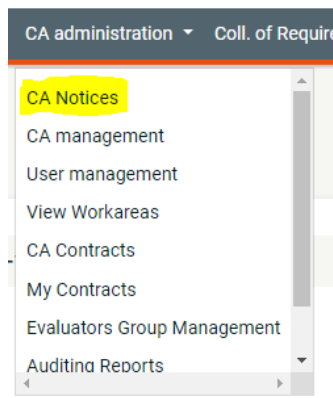
Following the introduction of this software release, the eTenders platform can support the standalone publication of a CAN or VEAT notice for a procurement that took place outside of the platform. The platform will also support the publication of standalone below threshold CANs, using the eForms standard, if required.

It should be noted that as these notices will be created outside the context of a CfT, they will include no pre-filling and user will need to add manually all information required in the notice, in order for the notice to validate.

Office of Government Procurement.

06th February 2024