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ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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Interim Committee on Government Procurement

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**QUESTIONNAIRE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
IN GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT**

Response by Norway

The attached communication contains the replies from the delegation of Norway to the questionnaire on Information Technology in Government Procurement contained in document GPA/IC/W/4/Rev.1, dated 16 September 1994.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

Replies received from Norway

1. Could delegations give a brief description of any steps taken or planned to introduce information technology (electronic commerce) into public procurement? If so, does this cover contracts which are covered under the Agreement presently in force, or under the newly-signed Agreement? At all levels of government? In the event that delegations are not considering introducing information technology into public procurement, could they explain the reasons?

Norway has during the past few years taken several steps in introducing information technology (IT) into the process of public procurement. The steps have been taken in connection with the entering into force of the EEA Agreement, which covers all public procurement of goods, works and services in the EEA countries over certain thresholds. Most contracts subject to the GPA will be covered since the EEA Agreement has a much broader coverage than the current GPA.

Standardized forms have been prepared for all EEA-covered notices, and these are to be sent to the Publications Office (P.O.) in Luxembourg. A computer-based programme has been developed which contains forms for procurement of *goods* and *works*, and these can easily be edited, stored and printed out. These programmes are available to all central and sub-central entities. We will now broaden this programme to also contain the forms which are to be used for service contracts, as well as for entities in the utility field. All central state entities have to notify their procurements in the Norwegian Gazette, which again sends them to the Publications Office. We are now working on a project for electronic tendering in the Norwegian Gazette and the P.O. If this is realized, the programme will probably be based on EDIFACT standards.

We have for the time being no electronic database containing all public procurements. We are, however, working on a scheme where the Norwegian Gazette would have such a database, since almost all notices go through them (in addition to being the publication organ for state entities, they also assist in translations of the notices from Norwegian to an official EU language). The Ministry of Industry and Energy is involved in a pre-project in this connection, called the "DOFFIN project". The purpose of this project is to consider the possibilities of establishing a central, national database on public procurement. Such a database will probably also contain information on contracts *under* the thresholds.

Norway is also participating in the SIMAP programme of the EU. The SIMAP programme has several projects and sub-projects aimed at different parts of the procurement process.

2. What function(s) would information technology serve in such systems and who will be the users?

The main function of our current systems is to simplify the procurement process for the buyers in processing the procurement notices. The SIMAP programme, however, has several projects concerning market monitoring and analysis, as well as information dissemination programmes, and information exchange between suppliers and purchasers.

3. Could delegations describe the technical aspects of the systems in use or planned? In particular as regards infrastructure/hardware-software and its options/standards?

The technical aspects of the system we have today: Computer-based, with a minimum requirement of IBM compatibility (386/486) with hard disk and Windows 3.1.

4. Could delegations describe any limitations affecting access to information available in a system? How wide is potential access to interested suppliers? What are the access possibilities for suppliers of other signatory countries? What possible obstacles to access might arise for suppliers in other signatory countries?

N/A

5. Has any thought been given to the question of interaction between electronic tendering and the obligations concerning publication and time-limits imposed by the Agreement?

N/A

6. For those delegations who use a database which lists government procurement opportunities:

- (i) What is the name of this database?
- (ii) How long has the database been operational and how many suppliers use the database?
- (iii) Is a fee charged to suppliers using this system? If so, how much, and what is included in the fee?
- (iv) Can suppliers obtain tender documentation electronically? If so, how?
- (v) How is information on the database organized?
- (vi) Does the database offer any other features?
- (vii) What is the approximate number of procurement opportunities listed on the database annually?
- (viii) Is the system managed by the government or a private company?

N/A