

PROCUREMENT

The Winning Tender Response Checklist

A 64-point pre-submission checklist that catches the compliance errors and scoring gaps that get European public bids disqualified — before you hit submit.

- ✓ Print-optimized
- ✓ Expert-curated
- ✓ Actionable tips

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Most public tenders are not lost on price. They are lost on a missing signature, an ESPD field left blank, a word count overrun, or an evaluation criterion the bidder never explicitly answered. Contracting authorities in the EU operate under strict equal-treatment rules: if your submission breaches a mandatory ("skal" / "must") requirement, the buyer is often legally obliged to reject it — no matter how good the rest of your bid is. This checklist exists to make sure a fully compliant, fully scoring response is the only thing you ever submit.

Work through it in four passes: **Eligibility**, **Compliance**, **Scoring**, and **Final Submission**. Tick nothing from memory — open the tender documents and verify each line.

Pass 1 — Eligibility & Exclusion Grounds

Before writing a single word, confirm you are actually allowed to bid and capable of winning.

- ☐ You meet every **mandatory exclusion** check (Art. 57 Directive 2014/24/EU): no unspent criminal convictions, no unpaid taxes or social security, no insolvency.
- ☐ You satisfy all **selection criteria** (economic standing, technical capacity, relevant references) at the levels stated in the contract notice.
- ☐ Your average annual turnover meets the minimum (note: the EU caps this at **2× the contract value** unless justified).
- ☐ You have the required **references** — usually 2–3 comparable contracts within the last 3 years (services/supplies) or 5 years (works).
- ☐ Required **certifications** are valid through the contract period (e.g. ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 27001, sector licences).
- ☐ If bidding as a **consortium / joint venture**, the lead party, liability split, and each member's ESPD are confirmed.
- ☐ If relying on **subcontractors' capacity**, you have signed commitment letters proving those resources are available.
- ☐ You have checked the contract is not reserved (e.g. for sheltered workshops, Art. 20) or restricted to a framework you are not on.

Pass 2 — Mandatory Compliance Requirements

These are pass/fail. One miss can void the entire bid.

- ☐ **ESPD / EEEF** (European Single Procurement Document) completed in full — every section, no blank mandatory fields.
- ☐ You have answered **every "shall" / "must" / "skal" requirement** explicitly, in the buyer's wording, with a clear statement of compliance.
- ☐ All requested **forms and annexes** are included and use the buyer's exact templates (do not substitute your own).
- ☐ **Pricing schedule (BoQ)** is completed in the supplied format, in the correct currency, with no empty cells (enter "0" or "included" rather than leaving blank).
- ☐ Prices are stated **excl./incl. VAT exactly as instructed** — mixing these up is a common rejection cause.
- ☐ **Validity period** of your offer matches or exceeds the buyer's requirement (commonly 90 days).
- ☐ Every document is in the **required language**; certified translations attached where mandated.
- ☐ **File formats** match the spec (PDF/A, signed PDF, Excel for BoQ) and individual file-size limits are respected.
- ☐ Mandatory **declarations** signed by an authorised signatory (anti-corruption, conflict of interest, data protection / GDPR).
- ☐ Any **samples, mock-ups, or test deliverables** are prepared and dispatched to arrive before the deadline.

Pass 3 — Maximising Your Evaluation Score

This is where bids are won. Most public contracts are awarded on **MEAT** (Most Economically Advantageous Tender), not lowest price.

- ☐ You have the **published weighting** (e.g. Quality 60% / Price 40%) and have invested effort proportionally.
- ☐ Every **award sub-criterion** has a dedicated, clearly headed response section that mirrors the buyer's structure.
- ☐ You understand the **scoring model** (e.g. 0–10 scale, "excellent / good / acceptable" bands) and have written to hit the top band.
- ☐ Claims are **evidenced**, not asserted: named staff CVs, methodology diagrams, KPIs, case examples with metrics.
- ☐ Your response is **tailored to this buyer** — their objectives, end-users, and stated pain points appear in your text.
- ☐ You address **social value / environmental criteria** (Art. 67 secondary considerations) with concrete, measurable commitments.
- ☐ **Word / page limits** per question are respected — text over the limit is typically ignored or penalised.
- ☐ You used the buyer's **terminology** and answered the question asked, not the one you wished they'd asked.
- ☐ A **colleague who did not write the bid** has scored it against the published criteria and confirmed it reads as top-band.

Pass 4 — Final Submission Control

The last hour is when avoidable disasters happen.

- ☐ You have **re-read the latest version** of the tender and all **Q&A clarifications** — answers issued during the process are binding.
 - ☐ The **submission deadline** is confirmed in the correct **time zone**, including exact minute (e.g. 12:00 CET, not "noon").
 - ☐ The bid is submitted via the **correct portal** (Mercell/Doffin, TED eSender, the buyer's e-procurement system) — email is usually invalid.
 - ☐ You have allowed a **buffer of at least 2 hours** before deadline for upload failures; portals lock the instant the clock runs out.
 - ☐ **Electronic signatures / seals** are applied where required and verified to open correctly.
 - ☐ You received and **saved the portal submission receipt** as proof of on-time delivery.
 - ☐ A final **document inventory** confirms every required file is uploaded and named per the buyer's convention.
 - ☐ Internal **bid/no-bid sign-off** and pricing approval are on record before submission.
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The Five Most Common Disqualification Causes

1. **Late submission** — even 60 seconds late. Public buyers have no discretion to accept it.
2. **Incomplete ESPD or missing mandatory annex** — a single blank field can be fatal.
3. **Unanswered mandatory ("shall") requirement** — silence reads as non-compliance.
4. **Pricing errors** — wrong VAT treatment, empty BoQ cells, wrong currency.
5. **Exceeding word/page limits** — the over-limit content is discarded, often the part you needed most.

How Tenderen Turns This Checklist Into a Workflow

Running this by hand on every bid is exactly the manual burden Tenderen removes:

- **AI document analysis** extracts every "shall"/"must" requirement, deadline, and evaluation criterion from the tender PDFs the moment you upload them — so nothing in Pass 2 or 3 is missed.
- **Requirement-to-response mapping** ensures each mandatory item and award sub-criterion has a tracked answer before submission.
- **Deadline tracking** keeps the correct portal, time zone, and validity period in front of your whole team.
- **The AI bid writer** drafts responses tailored to the buyer's criteria and weightings, reusing evidence from your document library.

Start free at **tenderen.com** and run your next public tender through a checklist that checks itself.

Tenderen — AI-Powered Public Procurement. Find, analyse, and win public tenders across Norway, the EU, and beyond.

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