WORK SAMPLE · SELF-DIRECTED ANALYSIS · DETAILS ANONYMISED

Reading Past the Notice

A €3.8M EU water infrastructure tender, and the four things that decided it — none of which were in the contract notice.

AT A GLANCE

Subject	Supply and installation of telemetry-controlled hydraulic equipment for an irrigation district, Southern Europe
Contract value	€3,777,933 (base) · €4,533,520 (including option)
Procedure	EU open procedure, most economically advantageous tender — 75 technical / 25 price
Document set	33 documents, ~450 pages, native language only; several as scanned images
Question asked	Should a foreign equipment manufacturer bid?
Answer delivered	**No-bid** — with the evidence for it

METHOD

The contract notice and the instructions to tenderers describe a clean, open, well-drafted procurement: no turnover requirement, no national contractor licence, a ten-year reference window, and an explicit technology-neutrality clause inviting alternative radio solutions.

On that basis the opportunity screens as attractive. The full document set says otherwise.

I read all 33 documents, including the ones bidders usually skip: the bill of quantities, the unit price build-up annex, and the reference assembly drawings inside the design report. Scanned annexes were rendered and read page by page.

WHAT THE DOCUMENTS SHOWED

FINDING 01 — SCOPE

The priced scope was ~47% smaller than the narrative scope

The notice and the design report both describe **2,902 hydrant points** converted to telemetry. The bill of quantities prices **1,377** complete telemetry assemblies. The remaining 1,375 points receive a plain cast-iron gate valve at €590 each — no remote terminal unit, no radio, no telemetry.

The installation line item confirms it: 2,752 units installed, against 1,377 telemetry assemblies supplied. The project had been de-scoped to fit its budget envelope; the narrative text was never updated.

Consequence: a bidder pricing from the narrative overstates the equipment package by roughly **€1.9M.**

FINDING 02 — LOCK-IN

An incumbent-compatibility requirement, located in the price annex

Inside the unit price analysis — annex 3.2, within the technical description of the two principal line items — sits one sentence:

> *"Compatible with the management software already installed and in use by the Client, for the part of the district already equipped with such a distribution system."*

It appears nowhere in the notice, nowhere in the instructions to tenderers, and nowhere in the technical specification. It establishes that part of the network already runs an existing proprietary system, and that the new supply must interface with it.

It also contradicts the tender's own award criteria, which allocate points for open, non-proprietary protocols and for *documented absence of technological dependency*.

FINDING 03 — SPECIFICATION

The reference drawing in the approved design was a manufacturer's product drawing

The design report's assembly drawing for the main delivery unit carries a title block naming a commercial system, and a parts list naming a proprietary meter-and-valve assembly by its trade name.

The tender's "no brand names / or equivalent" clause was drafted narrowly: it covers only the air-valve items whose trade names were copied from the regional price list. It does not reach the drawing that defines the contract's principal product.

FINDING 04 — PRICE

The cost build-up was set at an incumbent's production cost

Every unit price in the annex is built the same way: direct cost, plus 15% overhead, plus 10% contractor profit. That makes the client's assumed material cost directly readable.

For the complete DN80 telemetry delivery assembly the allowance is **€855**, plus €150 for the user device. That €855 is expected to cover: cast-iron monobloc body, hydrovalve, meter, flow limiter, stainless-steel anti-tamper enclosure with locks, bistable solenoid, remote terminal unit with radio module, antenna, and a ten-year lithium battery, IP68, resin-encapsulated.

DN100 is priced only €30 above DN80 — a spread no component-buying assembler achieves. This is a serial producer's own cost sheet, and a bidder must still discount beneath it.

ALSO EXTRACTED

Qualification	No economic/financial requirement. Technical: €1,888,967 of analogous supplies over ten years. Reliance on third-party capacity permitted.
Hard technical gates	Meter to ISO 16399 / EN 14268 / EN ISO 4064-1, accuracy class 2; flow ratio R = Q3/Q1 ≥ 100; delivery-group head loss ≤ 0.60 bar at Q3; accredited ISO/IEC 17025 test reports per nominal diameter, under five years old
Radio minimums	≥10 km bidirectional range; ≤3 min data refresh; ≥10-year battery; ≥250 field units per gateway; encryption; licence-exempt band; full-district coverage study mandatory
Commercial terms	20% advance payment; 30/50/20 payment schedule; 2% bid bond (€90,670); liquidated damages 0.5‰ per day capped at 10%; 24-month warranty; price revision indexed to producer prices
Award mechanics	75/25 quality/price; 47 of 75 technical points awarded on panel discretion; elimination below 40/75

Non-subcontractable	Supply of the metering units and configuration of the supervisory system must be performed by the winning bidder directly

RECOMMENDATION

No-bid for a foreign equipment manufacturer without an existing position in this market.

The procurement is legally well-constructed and the equivalence provisions are genuine. But the design underneath it is built on one supplier's product, part of the network already runs that supplier's system, the cost basis is that supplier's production cost, and 47 of 75 technical points sit with a local evaluation panel. A newcomer offering a different radio band and different software would have to clear a 40/75 elimination threshold against that.

Delivered with the scope discrepancy quantified, so that if the client chose to proceed anyway, they would at least price the contract that exists rather than the one the narrative describes.

WHY IT MATTERED

A tender of this size takes weeks to bid: a full-district radio coverage study, accredited test reports for every nominal diameter, a 25-page technical report in the procurement language, an execution programme, and a €90,670 bid bond.

The decisive evidence took three hours to find — and all of it sat in annexes that a notice-level screen never opens.

Self-directed analysis prepared as a work sample. Buyer, location, supplier and product names removed; all figures, thresholds, standards and findings are as they appear in the published tender documents.