

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0476/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Reservations concerning the call for tenders for a broadcasting project for Belarus

The unclear structure of the winning consortium, in breach of the tender rules, changes to its composition and doubts as to the equal treatment of bidders give rise to reservations concerning the call for tenders for a broadcasting project for Belarus.

The Commission admitted four bidders to the second phase of the call for tenders, one of which was the consortium formed by Media Consulta and Center TV. Following the Commission's announcement of the results of the tender, it turns out that the winning consortium is in fact made up of a different set of organisations from those with which it qualified for the tender. A Commission press release reveals that the consortium selected to carry out the above task consists of Media Consulta, the TV station RTVI, European Radio for Belarus and Radio Baltic Waves. Media Consulta's main partner, the TV station Center TV, has, however, vanished from the equation. In spite of the fact that the consortium's composition has undergone radical changes, this has not led to its exclusion by the Commission.

Under the tender rules, changes to the composition of an entity taking part in a call for tenders are not permitted during the procurement procedure. This was the Commission's response to the consortium consisting of the TV station Telewizja Polska S.A. and Radio Białystock, which wished to be joined by the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), an organisation that has been awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament. The BAJ has worked with the consortium before, including on sections of a media project. Failing to receive approval for this justified addition to the grouping, the consortium was obliged to drop its plan.

In view of the above:

Why have the winning consortium's impermissible changes to its composition not led to its exclusion from the tender procedure?

Why, instead of treating all bidders equally, has the Commission approved changes to the composition of one consortium and not the enlargement of another?

Media Consulta, a consultancy firm, has no experience in producing television and radio programmes and the vast majority of production will, therefore, be subcontracted to its partners. This being the case, it should be acknowledged that the claim that the other members of the consortium are merely subcontractors and not main partners is unfounded. This situation contradicts the tender rules, which clearly state that only up to 45% of the value of the tender can be subcontracted.