

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN EXPENDITURE VERIFICATION OF
A GRANT CONTRACT
- EXTERNAL ACTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION -**

The following are the terms of reference ('ToR') under which ACTED Tunisia/Libya tender auditing services for auditing firms to perform an expenditure verification and to report in connection with a European Union financed grant contract. Where in these ToR the 'Contracting Authority' is mentioned, this refers to the European Commission, which has signed the Grant Contract with the Beneficiary and is providing the grant funding. The Contracting Authority is not a party to this agreement.

1.1. Responsibilities of the Parties to the Engagement

The term "**Beneficiary(ies)**" refers collectively to all Beneficiaries, including the Coordinator, of the Action. When there is only one Beneficiary of the Action, the terms Beneficiary(ies) and Coordinator should both be understood as referring to the only Beneficiary of the Action (see footnote 1). Where applicable the term 'Beneficiary(ies)' includes its affiliated entity(ies).

- The Coordinator is responsible for providing a Financial Report for the action financed by the Grant Contract which complies with the terms and conditions of the Grant Contract and for ensuring that this Financial Report reconciles to the Beneficiary's accounting and bookkeeping system and to the underlying accounts and records. The Beneficiary is responsible for providing sufficient and adequate information, both financial and non-financial, in support of the Financial Report.
- The Coordinator accepts that the ability of the Auditor to perform the procedures required by this engagement effectively depends upon the Beneficiary(ies), and as the case may be its affiliated entity(ies), providing full and free access to its (their) staff and its (their) accounting and bookkeeping system and underlying accounts and records.
- 'The **Auditor**' is responsible for performing the agreed-upon procedures as specified in these ToR. 'Auditor' refers to the audit firm contracted for performing this engagement and for submitting a report of factual findings to the Beneficiary. 'Auditor' can refer to the person or persons conducting the verification, usually the engagement partner or other members of the engagement team. The engagement partner is the partner or other person in the audit firm who is responsible for the engagement and for the report that is issued on behalf of the firm, and who has the appropriate authority from a professional, legal or regulatory body.

By agreeing these ToR the Auditor confirms that he/she meets at least one of the following conditions:

- The Auditor and/or the firm is a member of a national accounting or auditing body or institution which in turn is member of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC).
- The Auditor and/or the firm is a member of a national accounting or auditing body or institution. Although this organisation is not member of the IFAC, the Auditor commits him/herself to undertake this engagement in accordance with the IFAC standards and ethics set out in these ToR.
- The Auditor and/or the firm is registered as a statutory auditor in the public register of a public oversight body in an EU member state in accordance with the principles of public

oversight set out in Directive 2006/43/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (this applies to auditors and audit firms based in an EU Member State¹).

- The Auditor and/or the firm is registered as a statutory auditor in the public register of a public oversight body in a third country and this register is subject to principles of public oversight as set out in the legislation of the country concerned (this applies to auditors and audit firms based in a third country).

1.2. Subject of the Engagement

The subject of this engagement is the final Financial Report in connection with a European Union financed grant contract.

1.3. Reason for the Engagement

The Coordinator is required to submit to the Contracting Authority an expenditure verification report produced by an external auditor in support of the payment requested by the Coordinator under Article 15 of the General Conditions of the Grant Contract. The Authorising Officer of the Commission requires this report because the payment of expenditure requested by the Coordinator is conditional on the factual findings of this report.

1.4. Engagement Type and Objective

This expenditure verification is an engagement to perform certain agreed-upon procedures with regard to the Financial Report for the Grant Contract. The objective of this expenditure verification is for the Auditor to carry out the specific procedures listed in Annex 2A to these ToR and to submit to the Coordinator a report of factual findings with regard to the specific verification procedures performed. Verification means that the Auditor examines the factual information in the Financial Report of the Coordinator and compares it with the terms and conditions of the Grant Contract. As this engagement is not an assurance engagement the Auditor does not provide an audit opinion and expresses no assurance. The Contracting Authority assesses for itself the factual findings reported by the Auditor and draws its own conclusions from these factual findings.

1.5. Standards and Ethics

The Auditor shall undertake this engagement in accordance with:

- the International Standard on Related Services ('ISRS') 4400 Engagements to perform Agreed-upon Procedures regarding Financial Information as promulgated by the IFAC;
- the IFAC Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants, developed and issued by IFAC's International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA), which establishes fundamental ethical principles for Auditors with regard to integrity, objectivity, independence, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, professional behaviour and technical standards. Although ISRS 4400 provides that independence is not a requirement for agreed-upon procedures engagements, the Contracting Authority requires that the Auditor is independent from the Beneficiary(ies) and complies with the independence requirements of the IFAC Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants.

¹ Directive 2006/43 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 147 May 2006 on statutory audits of annual accounts and consolidated, amending Council Directives 78/660/EEC and 83/349/EEC and repealing Council Directive 84/253 EEC.

1.6. Procedures, Evidence and Documentation

The Auditor plans the work so that an effective expenditure verification can be performed. The Auditor performs the procedures listed in Annex 2A of these ToR ('Listing of specific procedures to be performed') and applies the guidelines in Annex 2B (Guidelines for specific procedures to be performed). The evidence to be used for performing the procedures in Annex 2A is all financial and non-financial information which makes it possible to examine the expenditure claimed by the Coordinator in the Financial Report. The Auditor uses the evidence obtained from these procedures as the basis for the report of factual findings. The Auditor documents matters which are important in providing evidence to support the report of factual findings, and evidence that the work was carried out in accordance with ISRS 4400 and these ToR.

1.7. Reporting

The report on this expenditure verification should describe the purpose, the agreed-upon procedures and the factual findings of the engagement in sufficient detail to enable the Coordinator and the Contracting Authority to understand the nature and extent of the procedures performed by the Auditor and the factual findings reported by the Auditor.

The use of the Model Report for an Expenditure Verification of an EU Grant Contract in Annex 3 of these ToR is compulsory. This report should be provided by the Auditor to ACTED Country Director or Finance Coordinator within thirty-five working days after the day of signature of these ToRs at the date of the signature of the contract.

- Mobilization for the expenditure verification of a grant contract - within 10 working days
- Review of documentation - within 10 working days
- Drafting of the final report containing findings - within 12 working days

Annex 1A Listing of specific procedures to be performed

Annex 1B Guidelines for specific procedures to be performed

Annex 2 Model report for an expenditure verification of an EU grant contract

Annex 2A Listing of Specific Procedures to be performed

1 GENERAL PROCEDURES

1.1. Terms and Conditions of the Grant Contract

The Auditor:

- obtains an understanding of the terms and conditions of the Grant Contract by reviewing the Grant Contract and its annexes and other relevant information, and by inquiry of the Coordinator;
- obtains a copy of the original Grant Contract (signed by the Beneficiary(ies) and the Contracting Authority) with its annexes;
- obtains and reviews the Report (which includes a narrative and a financial section) as per Article 2.1 of the General Conditions;
- verifies whether the Grant Contract is mono or multi-beneficiary (see Grant Contract introduction part; in case of a multi-beneficiary grant the term 'Coordinator' is used);
- verifies whether there is (are) an affiliated entity(ies) to any of the Beneficiary(ies) (see Article 7.1 of the Special Conditions).

Note: the purpose of the latter two procedures is for the Auditor to understand the Beneficiary(ies) responsibilities for reporting and access to staff and documents.

The Practical Guide ('PRAG') provides important information for grant contracts (e.g. basic rules and award procedures). Where necessary or useful reference will be made to the PRAG and / or its annexes.

The PRAG can be found at: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do> (use the CTRL key to use link).

The latest key documents that are specifically related to grant contracts can be downloaded by clicking on PRAG, then on Annexes, then on Grants. The version indicated in the Call for Proposal and signed is the one to be used as reference.

1.2. Financial Report for the Grant Contract

The Auditor verifies that the Financial Report complies with the following conditions of Article 2 of the General Conditions the Grant Contract:

- The Financial Report must conform to the model in Annex VI of the Grant Contract;
- The Financial Report should cover the eligible costs of the Action as a whole, regardless of which part of it is financed by the Contracting Authority;
- The Financial Report should be drawn up in the language of the Grant Contract;
- The proof of the transfers of ownership of equipment, vehicles and supplies for which the purchase cost was more than €5000 per item (Article 7.6 of the General Conditions of the Grant Contract) should be annexed to the final Financial Report.

1.3. Rules for Accounting and Record keeping

- The Auditor examines — when performing the procedures listed in this Annex — whether the Beneficiary has complied with the rules for accounting and record keeping of Article 16 of the General Conditions the Grant Contract including and notably:
- The accounts kept by the Beneficiary for the implementation of the Action must be accurate and regular;
- The Beneficiary must have a double-entry book-keeping system;
- The accounts and expenditure relating to the Action must be easily traceable, identifiable and verifiable.

1.4. Reconciling the Financial Report to the Beneficiary(ies)'s Accounting System and Records

The Auditor reconciles the information in the Financial Report to the Beneficiary's accounting system and records (e.g. trial balance, general ledger accounts, sub ledgers etc.).

1.5. Exchange Rates

The Auditor verifies that the financial report for the Action is stated in the currency set out in the Special Conditions and in accordance with Article 15.9 of the General Conditions. The Auditor verifies that costs incurred in other currencies than the one used in the Beneficiary's accounts for the Action have been converted in accordance with the Beneficiary's usual accounting practices and in accordance with Article 15.10 of the General Conditions unless otherwise provided for in the Special Conditions.

1.6. Simplified Cost Options

- The Auditor verifies with **Annex III of the Grant Contract** i.e. **Budget for the Action** whether the Beneficiary(ies) have applied for the application of simplified costs i.e. for the application of any or a combination of unit costs, lump sums, flat-rate financing and apportionment. Eligible costs for the Action may be based on any or a combination of actual costs incurred, unit costs, lump sums, flat-rate financing and apportionment. Simplified cost options can apply to one or more of the direct cost headings of the Budget for the Action and Financial Report (i.e. cost headings 1 to 6), or to sub-cost headings or to specific cost items within these cost headings.
- The Auditor obtains an understanding of the conditions set out in:
 - **Article 2.1.c) of the General Conditions.** This Article stipulates that in case of simplified cost options the Report for the Action (narrative and financial) shall provide the qualitative and quantitative information needed to demonstrate the fulfilment of the conditions for reimbursement established in the Special Conditions;
 - **Articles 14.3 to 14.5** of the General Conditions; provisions for simplified cost options.
 - **Article 7.1** of the Special Conditions for apportionment

If simplified cost options apply, the Auditor performs the specific procedures set out at 3.1.(2) below.

2. PROCEDURES TO VERIFY CONFORMITY OF EXPENDITURE WITH THE BUDGET AND ANALYTICAL REVIEW

2.1. Budget of the Grant Contract

The Auditor carries out an analytical review of the expenditure headings in the Financial Report.

The Auditor verifies that the budget in the Financial Report corresponds with the budget of the Grant Contract (authenticity and authorisation of the initial budget) and that the expenditure incurred was indicated in the budget of the Grant Contract.

2.2. Amendments to the Budget of the Grant Contract

The Auditor verifies whether there have been amendments to the budget of the Grant Contract. Where this is the case the Auditor verifies that the Coordinator has:

- requested an amendment to the budget and obtained an addendum to the Grant Contract if such an addendum was required (Article 9 of the General Conditions).
- informed the Contracting Authority about the amendment if the amendment was within the scope of Article 9.4 of the General Conditions, and an addendum to the Grant Contract was not required.

3. PROCEDURES TO VERIFY SELECTED EXPENDITURE

3.1. Eligibility of Costs

The Auditor verifies, for each expenditure item selected, the eligibility criteria set out below.

(1) Actual costs incurred (Article 14.1)

The Auditor verifies that the actual expenditure for a selected item was incurred by and pertains to the Beneficiary(ies) or its (their) affiliated entity(ies). The Auditor should take into account the detailed conditions for actual costs incurred as set out in Article 14.1.(i) to (iii). For this purpose the Auditor examines supporting documents (e.g. invoices, contracts) and proof of payment. The Auditor also examines proof of work done, goods received or services rendered and he/she verifies the existence of assets if applicable.

At final reporting stage the costs incurred during the implementation period but not yet paid can be accepted as actual costs incurred, provided that (1) a liability exists (order, invoice or equivalent) for services rendered or goods supplied during the implementation period of the action, (2) the final costs are known and (3) these costs are listed in the final Financial Report (Annex VI) together with the estimated date of payment (see Article 14.1.a).(ii) of the General Conditions). The Auditor verifies whether these cost items have effectively been paid at the moment of the auditor's verification.

(2) Simplified cost options² (Article 14.3 – 14.5)

Where simplified cost options apply (see general procedure 1.6) the Auditor verifies:

² Refer to Annex "E3a2 Checklist for simplified cost options" to the PRAG for additional information.

- which options (i.e. unit costs, lump sums, flat-rate financing or apportionment) apply and to which (sub)cost-headings and/or cost items (Annex III (Budget for the Action) of the Grant Contract);
- which amount(s) or percentage rate(s) have been contractually agreed (Annex III (Budget of the Action) of the Grant Contract);
- which quantitative and/or qualitative information was used to determine and justify the declared costs (e.g. number of staff, number of items purchased; type of costs and activities financed by a lump sum)³;
- only for unit costs, lump sums and flat-rate financing: whether the maximum amounts of simplified cost options for each beneficiary (this includes if applicable simplified cost options of its affiliated entity(ies)) are not exceeded, in accordance with the conditions established in the Contract;
- the plausibility (i.e. necessity, reasonableness, reality) of the quantitative and qualitative information related to the declared costs;
- that the costs covered by lump sums, unit costs, flat-rate financing or apportionment are not included (no double funding) in other direct costs (cost headings 1 – 6), either actual or under simplified cost options;
- that the total costs stated in the Financial Report have been correctly determined;

Note: the Auditor is not required to verify the actual costs on which lump sums, unit costs or flat-rate financing are based.

(3) *Cut-off — Implementation period (Article 14.1a)*

The Auditor verifies that the expenditure for a selected item was incurred during the implementation period of the Action. An exception is made for costs relating to final reports including expenditure verification, audit and final evaluation reports of the Action and which may be incurred after the implementation period of the Action.

(4) *Budget (Article 14.1b)*

The Auditor verifies that the expenditure for a selected item was indicated in the Action budget.

(5) *Necessary (Article 14.1c)*

The Auditor verifies whether it is plausible that the expenditure for a selected item was necessary for the implementation of the Action and that it had to be incurred for the contracted activities of the Action by examining the nature of the expenditure with supporting documents.

(6) *Records (Article 14.1d)*

³ In Annex III (Budget for the Action), the second column of worksheet no.2 ("Justification of the estimated costs") for each of the corresponding budget item or heading should:

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts or percentages of simplified cost options, to which costs they refer, etc.;
- explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount;
- identify the beneficiary who use the simplified cost option (in case of affiliated entity, specify first the beneficiary), in order to verify the maximum amount for each beneficiary (which includes if applicable simplified cost options of its affiliated entity(ies)).

The Auditor verifies that expenditure for a selected item is recorded in the Beneficiary(ies)'s accounting system and was recorded in accordance with the applicable accounting standards of the country where the Beneficiary is established and the Beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices.

(7) *Applicable legislation (Article 14.1e)*

The Auditor verifies that expenditure complies with the requirements of tax and social security legislation where this is applicable (for example: employer's part of taxes, pension premiums and social security charges).

(8) *Justified (Article 14.1f)*

The Auditor verifies that expenditure for a selected item is substantiated by evidence (see section 1 of Annex 2B, Guidelines for Specific Procedures to be performed) and supporting documents as specified in Article 16.8 and 16.9 of the General Conditions of the Grant Contract.

(9) *Valuation*

The Auditor verifies that the monetary value of a selected expenditure item agrees with underlying documents (e.g. invoices, salary statements) and that correct exchange rates are used where applicable.

(10) *Classification*

The Auditor examines the nature of the expenditure for a selected item and verifies that the expenditure item has been classified under the correct (sub)heading of the Financial Report.

(11) *Compliance with Procurement Principles and Nationality and Origin Rules*

The Auditor verifies whether the Beneficiary has concluded implementation contracts with contractors as set out in Articles 10.1 and 14.1.a(iv) of the General Conditions and to which expenditure (sub)heading(s), a class(es) of expenditure items or expenditure item(s) this applies.

The Auditor verifies for the expenditure items concerned whether the Beneficiary has complied with the principles for procurement and the nationality and origin rules as set out in Annex IV (Procurement by grant Beneficiaries in the context of European Union external actions)

For this purpose the Auditor inspects the underlying documents of the procurement and purchase process including where applicable proof of nationality and origin.

Where the Auditor finds issues of non-compliance, he/she reports the nature of such issues as well as their financial impact in terms of ineligible expenditure. When examining supporting documents the Auditor takes into account the risk indicators listed at the end of Annex 2B.

3.2. Eligible Direct Costs (Article 14.2)

- (1) The Auditor verifies that expenditure for selected items which are recorded under one of the direct costs headings (1 to 6) of the Financial Report, are covered by the direct costs as defined in Article 14.2 by examining the nature of these expenditure items.
- (2) The Auditor verifies that duties, taxes and charges, including VAT which are recorded under direct costs are **not recoverable** by the beneficiary(ies) and/ or its(their) affiliated entities (see Article 14.2.g) of the General Conditions). The Auditor obtains evidence that the Beneficiary(ies) and or its affiliated entities cannot reclaim the duties, taxes or

charges, including VAT through an exemption system and/or a refund *a posteriori*. For this purpose the Auditor should refer to Annex E3a1 (Information on the tax regime) which provides information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts (*Note*: the standard template / text is annexed to the PRAG and it can be found at the PRAG website mentioned at procedure 1.1 above).

In case Article 7 of the Special Conditions provides that duties, taxes and charges, including VAT are not eligible, but the "accepted costs system" is introduced: they remain ineligible costs, but they can be accepted as co-financing. Therefore the Auditor additionally verifies that the tax amount concerned is reported under heading 12 of the financial report, is properly computed, in line with supporting documents (e.g. invoices) and relate to eligible costs and cost items included under headings 1 to 10 of the Financial Report.

3.3. Contingency Reserve (Article 14.6)

The Auditor verifies that the provision for contingency reserve (heading 8 in Financial Report) does not exceed 5% of the direct eligible costs of the Action and that the Coordinator has obtained prior written authorisation from the Contracting Authority for the use of this contingency reserve.

3.4. Indirect costs (Article 14.7)

The Auditor verifies that the indirect costs to cover overhead costs (heading 10 in Financial Report) do not exceed the maximum percentage of 7% of the total final amount of eligible direct costs of the Action or the percentage established in article 3 of the Special Conditions of the Grant Contract if applicable.

3.5. In kind contributions (Article 14.8)

- (1) The Auditor verifies that the costs in the Financial Report do not include contributions in kind. Any contributions in kind (these should be listed separately in Annex III, Budget for the Action), do **not** represent actual expenditure and are not eligible costs.
- (2) Contributions in kind can be accepted as co-financing and in this case this should be explicitly stipulated in Article 7.1 of the Grant Contract. The Auditor verifies whether such co-financing is applicable and whether it is properly stated under heading 12 of the Financial Report.

3.6. Non-eligible costs (Article 14.9)

The Auditor verifies that the expenditure for a selected item does not concern an ineligible cost as described in Article 14.9 of the General Conditions. These costs include *inter alia* currency exchange losses.

3.7. Revenues of the Action

The Auditor examines whether the revenues which should be attributed to the Action (including grants and funding received from other donors and other revenue generated by the Beneficiary as part of the Action have been allocated to the Action and disclosed in the Financial Report. For this purpose the Auditor inquires with the Beneficiary and examines documentation obtained from the Beneficiary(ies). The Auditor is not expected to examine the completeness of the revenues reported.

Annex 2B Guidelines for Specific Procedures to be performed

1. VERIFICATION EVIDENCE

When performing the specific procedures listed in Annex 2A, the Auditor may apply techniques such as inquiry and analysis, (re)computation, comparison, other clerical accuracy checks, observation, inspection of records and documents, inspection of assets and obtaining confirmations.

The Auditor obtains verification evidence from these procedures to draw up the report of factual findings. Verification evidence is all information used by the Auditor in arriving at the factual findings and it includes the information contained in the accounting records underlying the Financial Report and other information (financial and non-financial).

The contractual requirements that relate to verification evidence are:

- Expenditure should be identifiable, verifiable and recorded in the accounting records of the Beneficiary (Article 14.1.d of the General Conditions of the Grant Contract);
- The Beneficiary(ies) will allow any external auditor to carry out verifications on the basis of supporting documents for the accounts, accounting documents and any other document relevant to the financing of the Action. The Beneficiary gives access to all documents and databases concerning the technical and financial management of the Action (Article 16.3 of the General Conditions);
- Article 16.9 of the General Conditions of the Grant Contract provides a list of the types and nature of evidence that the Auditor will often find in expenditure verifications.

Moreover, for the purpose of the procedures listed in Annex 2A, records, accounting and supporting documents:

- shall be easily accessible and filed so as to facilitate their examination (Article 16.7 of the General Conditions);
- shall be available in the original form or in the form of copies (as set out in the PRAG), including in electronic form.

Guidance: records and accounting and supporting documents should be available in documentary form, whether paper, electronic or other medium (e.g. a written record of a meeting is more reliable than an oral presentation of the matters discussed). Electronic documents can be accepted only where:

- the documentation was first received or created (e.g. an order form or confirmation) by the Beneficiary(ies) in electronic form; or
- the Auditor is satisfied that the Beneficiary uses an electronic archiving system which meets established standards (e.g. a certified system which complies with national law).
- should preferably be obtained from independent sources outside the entity (an original supplier's invoice or contract is more reliable than an internally approved receipt note);
- which is generated internally is more reliable if it has been subject to control and approval;
- obtained directly by the Auditor (e.g. inspection of assets) is more reliable than evidence obtained indirectly (e.g. inquiry about the asset).

If the Auditor finds that the above criteria for evidence are not sufficiently met, he/she should detail this in the factual findings.

2. OBTAINING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE GRANT CONTRACT (ANNEX 2A — PROCEDURE 1.1)

The Auditor obtains an understanding of the terms and conditions of the Grant Contract. S/he should **pay particular attention to** Annex I of the Grant Contract (the Description of the Action), Annex II (General Conditions) and **Annex IV (Procurement by grant Beneficiaries in the context of European Union external actions) which provides principles for procurement and nationality and origin rules.. Failure to comply with these principles or rules makes expenditure ineligible for EU financing.**

The Auditor ensures with the Beneficiary that the applicable principles for procurement and the nationality and origin rules are clearly identified and understood. If the Auditor finds that the terms and conditions to be verified are not sufficiently clear he/she should request clarification from the Beneficiary.

3. SELECTING EXPENDITURE FOR VERIFICATION (ANNEX 2A — PROCEDURES 3.1 – 3.7)

The expenditure claimed by the Coordinator in the Financial Report is generally presented under the following expenditure headings: 1. Human Resources, 2. Travel, 3. Equipment and Supplies, 4. Local office, 5. Other costs, services, 6. Other, 8. Provision for contingency reserve and 10. Indirect costs. Expenditure headings 1. to 6. represent **direct** costs of the Action. Expenditure headings can be broken down into expenditure subheadings such as for example 1.1 Salaries.

Expenditure subheadings can be broken down into individual expenditure items or classes of expenditure items with the same or similar characteristics. The form and nature of the supporting evidence (e.g. a payment, a contract, an invoice etc.) and the way expenditure is recorded (e.g. journal entries) vary with the type and nature of the expenditure and the underlying actions or transactions. However, in all cases expenditure items should reflect the accounting (or financial) value of the underlying actions or transactions, whatever the type and nature of the action or transaction concerned.

Value should be the principal factor used by the Auditor to select expenditure items or classes of expenditure items for verification. The Auditor selects high-value expenditure items to ensure an appropriate coverage of expenditure.

4. VERIFICATION COVERAGE OF EXPENDITURE (ANNEX 2A — PROCEDURES 3.1 – 3.7)

The Auditor applies the principles and criteria set out below when planning and performing the specific verification procedures for selected expenditure in Annex 2A (procedures 3.1–3.7).

Verification by the Auditor and verification coverage of expenditure items does not necessarily mean a complete and exhaustive verification of all the expenditure items that are included in a specific expenditure heading or subheading. The Auditor should ensure a systematic and representative verification. Depending on certain conditions (see further below) the Auditor may obtain sufficient verification results for an expenditure heading or subheading by looking at a limited number of selected expenditure items.

The Auditor may apply statistical sampling techniques for the verification of one or more expenditure headings or subheadings of the Financial Report. The Auditor examines whether

‘populations’ (i.e. expenditure subheadings or classes of expenditure items within expenditure subheadings) are suitable and sufficiently large (i.e. are made up of large numbers of items) for effective statistical sampling.

If applicable the Auditor should explain in the report of factual findings for which headings or subheadings of the Financial Report sampling has been applied, the method used, the results obtained and whether the sample is representative.

The Expenditure Coverage Ratio (‘ECR’) is the total amount of expenditure verified by the Auditor, expressed as a percentage of the total amount of expenditure reported by the Coordinator in the Financial Report. This amount is reported in Annex V of the Grant Contract.

The Auditor ensures that the overall ECR is at least **65 %**. If he/she finds an exception rate of less than 10 % of the total amount of expenditure verified (i.e. 6.5 %) the Auditor finalises the verification procedures and continues with reporting.

If the exception rate found is higher than 10 % the Auditor extends verification procedures until the ECR is at least **85 %**. The Auditor then finalises verification procedures and continues with reporting regardless of the total exception rate found. The Auditor ensures that the **ECR for each expenditure heading and subheading** in the Financial Report is at least **10 %**.

5. PROCEDURES TO VERIFY SELECTED EXPENDITURE (ANNEX 2A — PROCEDURES 3.1 – 3.7)

The Auditor verifies the selected expenditure items by carrying out procedures 3.1–3.11 listed in Annex 2A and reports all the factual findings and exceptions resulting from these procedures. Verification exceptions are all verification deviations found when performing the procedures set out in Annex 2A.

The Auditor quantifies the amount of verification exceptions found and the potential impact on the EU contribution, should the Commission declare the expenditure item(s) concerned ineligible (taking into account the percentage of funding by the Commission and the impact on indirect expenditure (e.g. administrative costs, overheads)). The Auditor reports all exceptions found, including those for which he/she cannot quantify the amount of the verification exception found and the potential impact on the EU contribution.

Example: if the Auditor finds an exception of € 1 000 with regard to procurement principles for a grant contract where the EU finances 60 % of the expenditure and where indirect costs represent 7 % of total direct eligible expenses, the Auditor reports an exception of € 1 000 and a financial impact of 642€ ($€ 1\,000 \times 60 \% \times 1.07$).

RISK INDICATORS PROCUREMENT

- Inconsistencies in the dates of the documents or illogical sequence of dates. Examples:
 - Tender dated after the award of contract or before the sending of the invitations to tender
 - Tender by the winning tenderer dated before the publication date of the tender or dated significantly later than tenders from other tenderers
 - Tenders by different candidates all having the same date
 - Dates on documents not plausible/consistent with dates on accompanying documentation (e.g. date on the tender not plausible/consistent with the postal date on the envelope; date of a fax not plausible/consistent with the printed date of the fax machine)
- Unusual similarities in tenders by candidates participating in the same tender. Examples:
 - Same wording, sentences and terminology in tenders from different tenderers
 - Same layout and format (e.g. font type, font size, margin sizes, indents, paragraph wrapping, etc.) in tenders from different tenderers
 - Similar letterhead paper or logos
 - Same prices used in tenders from different tenderers for a number of subcomponents or line items
 - Identical grammar, spelling or typing errors in tenders from different tenderers
 - Use of similar stamps and similarities in signatures
- Financial statement or other information indicating that two tenderers participating in the same tender are related or part of the same group (e.g. where financial statements are provided, the notes to the financial statements may disclose ultimate ownership of the group. Ownership information may also be found in public registers for accounts.)
- Inconsistencies in the selection and award decision process. Examples:
 - Award decisions not plausible / consistent with selection and award criteria
 - Errors in the application of the selection and award criteria
 - A regular supplier of the beneficiary participates as a member of a tender evaluation committee
- Other elements and examples indicating a risk of a privileged relationship with tenderers:
 - The same tenderer (or small group of tenderers) is invited with unusual frequency to tender for different contracts
 - The same tenderer (or small group of tenderers) wins an unusually high proportion of the bids
 - A tenderer is frequently awarded contracts for different types of goods or services
 - The winning tenderer invoices additional goods not provided for in the tender (e.g. additional spare parts invoiced without clear justification, installation costs invoiced although not provided for in the tender).
- Other documentation, issues and examples indicating a risk of irregularities:
 - Use of photocopies instead of original documents
 - Use of pro-forma invoices as supporting documents instead of official invoices
 - Manual changes on original documents (e.g. figures manually changed, figures 'tippexed', etc.)
 - Use of non-official documents (e.g. letterhead paper not showing certain official and/or compulsory information such as commercial registry number, company tax number, etc.)

