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978-1-009-44377-7 – Optimizing Public Interests through Competitive Tendering

Edited by Chris Jansen, Frank van Ommeren, Johan Wolswinkel, Sue Arrowsmith

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## OPTIMISING PUBLIC INTERESTS THROUGH COMPETITIVE TENDERING

Governments are increasingly trying to achieve a variety of public interests through competitive tendering of public contracts, authorisations, subsidies as well as public assets. Over the past decades, domestic and EU law has developed for these ‘limited rights’ at different speeds and is extremely fragmented: there is no coherent legal framework. This book provides information on the legal aspects of competitive allocation of all types of limited rights on the basis of an overarching perspective. It explains the impact of the legal framework on the ability of governments to achieve the public interests they pursue through competitive tendering. The book is relevant for domestic and EU public authorities, legislators, courts of law as well as academics. It discusses and connects in a consistent manner legal questions arising in the framework of competitive allocation of public contracts, authorisations, subsidies and public assets.

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# OPTIMISING PUBLIC INTERESTS THROUGH COMPETITIVE TENDERING

Concept, Context and Challenges

Edited by

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## PREFACE

Whenever the number of applicants exceeds the number of government rights – licenses, subsidies, contracts, and so on – available for grant, these rights are limited. A fundamental and returning issue here is to what extent governments are required to apply some form of competitive tendering to allocate these limited rights. In addressing this issue, it is key to acknowledge that governments are expected to act in the public interest. The public interest, however, is not a monolith, but covers many, sometimes conflicting public interests. Therefore, this edited volume puts central the question of how governments can pursue these different public interests when resorting to competitive tendering, or refraining therefrom.

To answer this central question, this edited volume aims at bringing together four different types of limited rights: public (procurement) contracts, licenses, subsidies and government sales. The fundamental and innovative challenge is to investigate whether and to what extent these different types of limited rights are subject to similar ‘allocation rules’.

It is striking that each of these rights has been subject to detailed analysis within its own subdiscipline, both in legal scholarship and in legal practice. However, the indispensable exercise of cross-fertilisation between these different types of limited rights is lacking. This edited volume overcomes this compartmentalisation of limited rights by adopting a unique approach of bringing together experts from these different subfields and starting a conversation between them.

This edited volume is the final result of two international expert meetings organised in 2018 and 2019 to foster the exchange of ideas and insights between experts from different subfields and jurisdictions. Both expert meetings were hosted by the Centre for Public Contract Law and Governance at the Faculty of Law of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. While the first expert meeting welcomed a wide range of participants from different (European) jurisdictions, the second expert meeting had a more focused approach in which only the authors of this edited volume participated. We are very grateful to the participants of both expert

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meetings for sharing their inspiring thoughts with others. Without any doubt, this very diverse and thought-provoking input has been vital in realising this edited volume.

It should come as no surprise that the initiative for this edited volume can be traced to the Netherlands. The Dutch legal system has turned out to be very adaptive and flexible in moving between domestic and EU law and between public law and private law when settling legal issues on the allocation of limited rights by governments. Moreover, the Centre for Public Contract Law and Governance has established a strong track record in conducting ‘bridging’ research on the allocation of different limited rights for almost two decades.

In particular, this edited volume builds on the book project *Scarcity and the State: The Allocation of Limited Rights by the Administration* (2016), which gave the first impetus to a Europe-wide exploration of building blocks for a consistent and general legal theory on the allocation of limited rights by governments.<sup>1</sup>

The edited volume that we present here has been realised in different stages. Based on the input that we received during both expert meetings, we have drafted a questionnaire for the authors who have contributed to Part I of this volume, which aims at characterising four different types of limited rights in a similar and therefore comparable way. Thanks to their willingness to follow this uniform format, the chapters in Part I have a similar structure. Next, we have asked the authors of Part II of this volume to connect these different limited rights on a various number of topics, after having considered the draft chapters of Part I. Following an iterative process, the authors of both parts have been enabled to clarify and elaborate upon remaining issues that were deemed crucial for the comparison between different kinds of limited rights. The chapters were finalised in spring 2023.

It goes without saying that we are indebted to the different authors for their willingness to participate in this phased and therefore lengthy process. We are indebted to them even more because of their excellent and highly valuable contributions. This holds in particular for Sue Arrowsmith. The larger size of her contribution to this volume and her

<sup>1</sup> Paul Adriaanse, Frank van Ommeren, Willemien den Ouden and Johan Wolswinkel (eds.), *Scarcity and the State I: The Allocation of Limited Rights by the Administration* (Cambridge: Intersentia, 2016); Paul Adriaanse, Frank van Ommeren, Willemien den Ouden and Johan Wolswinkel (eds.), *Scarcity and the State II: Member State Reports on Gambling Licences, Radio Frequencies and CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Permits* (Cambridge: Intersentia, 2016).

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being mentioned as co-editor on the cover is justified thanks to her great efforts during the expert meetings in paving the way and providing the structure for the comparison of different limited rights.

Finally, we would like to thank our student assistants Anne van Leeuwen, Michelle Rijnen and Terēze Tiesniece for their indispensable support in realising and finalising this edited volume.

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Frank van Ommeren  
Johan Wolswinkel**

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