

Operators interested in tendering for Aena's duty free shops move to next stage



13 Asian, American and European operators are advancing to the next stage

[Aena](#) has announced that the 10 major groups that had applied to take part in the bidding process to manage duty free shops in their airports meet the required solvency.

The 13 operators that have shown an interest are the European operators Heinemann, Smartseller, Lagardère, Aer Rianta, Dufry, Canariensis and DF; the Asian operators Bahrain Duty Free, Hotel Shilla (Korea), GMR (India), Setur (Turkey) and China Duty Free; and the American UETA.

This is the first time that Asian and American groups have expressed an interest in entering Spanish airports, which highlights the sense of anticipation surrounding Aena's bidding process, the largest in the world in terms of turnover.

Once the first stage has been completed, the operators that have provided evidence of the required solvency go on to submit their bids, for which candidates have a period of 12 weeks, until May 3.

The expected turnover in this bidding process is €18 billion (US\$19.4 million) and includes 86 duty-free sales outlets, plus a large number of premises dedicated to other categories. Together, they will occupy an approximate retail surface area of 66,000 square meters, which represents an increase of more than 40% compared to today. This new bidding process will involve refurbishing these commercial spaces at 27 airports in the Aena network, since the current contracts are in force until October 31, 2023.

The bidding specifications include a greater number of lots, with a total of six compared to the three in the previous bidding process, and with a sufficient size for economies of scale to be developed. Thus, Aena's main objectives are fulfilled: to boost participation and to encourage competition.

In addition, the duration of the contract is substantially increased, going from 7 to 12 years, with the option of three annual extensions. Aena thus responds to an important request from the operators, which is to optimize the amortization of the investments.

The bidding process strategy also aims to maximize the value of this business line by reaching more customers and boosting global sales; to attract the largest number of international operators to bid for the different lots (establishing rules that avoid empty lots being awarded); to diversify the business (expanding product categories and services); to adapt to changing trends that are occurring in both passenger type and the model; and to incorporate and support the development and implementation of new technologies and digitization.

These objectives, aimed at maximizing revenue, are anchored by Aena's fundamental pillars: sustainability, technology and customer experience.

In addition, the impact of Brexit has been taken into account, as it represents a major change in the business of Aena's duty free shops, since the duty free system predominates in almost all lots. It should be noted that British passengers represent Aena's main market.