

Market consultation

Quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast



This document is a translation of the Dutch version 'marktconsultatie kwartsloze ballast v1.1 30-08-22 NLD'. An English translation of the Dutch version has been made available for market parties participating in this market consultation. In the event of unexpected discrepancies, the original Dutch version shall in all cases have precedence.

Version	1.1
Date	30-08-2022
Status	Final
TN reference	TN374698

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1 Healthy railway ballast: free of quartz and asbestos!

The track consists of rails attached to the sleepers that lie in a ballast bed, see figure 1. This ballast bed consists of railway ballast from natural quarries and serves as the foundation of the track that absorbs the rail forces (train loads) via the rails and the sleepers, and distributes and transfers it to the substructure. The railway ballast, which consists of natural stone, generally contains a proportion of crystalline silica and possibly also asbestos, which is released as (respirable) dust in the chain from quarry to the track and can be inhaled. Respirable dust containing crystalline silica or asbestos can be harmful to humans if inhaled.

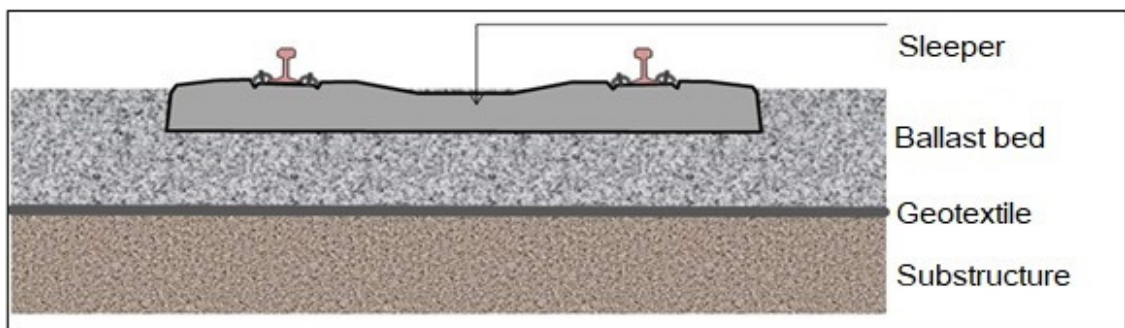


Figure 1: track construction

Crystalline silica, which can be hazardous to health if inhaled, consists of multiple forms of which the following three are classified as hazardous: quartz, cristobalite and tridymite. Because quartz is the most well-known and occurs in almost all rocks, we will only speak about quartz in the following, always meaning crystalline silica in one of the forms cristobalite, tridymite or quartz.

The health risks that can occur when breathing respirable quartz or asbestos can only be completely prevented if rocks are available in which no quartz and/or asbestos is present. In addition, these rocks must of course be suitable for use as railway ballast. To this end, the attached SPC00353 "Aggregates for quartzless railway ballast- Ballast free of crystalline silica and asbestos" has been drawn up (parts 1 and 2).

This market consultation aims to:

- map out which rocks contain no (or very little) quartz and no asbestos and
- which of those rocks are suitable to serve as railway ballast and
- which of those rocks fully (or partly) comply with the SPC00353 and
- what the available annual capacity of those rocks is for ProRail .

1.1 ProRail at a glance

ProRail B.V. is responsible for the railway network in the Netherlands: construction, maintenance, management and safety. Employees ensure that 1,200,000 passengers and 100,000 tons of goods reach their destination every day, 24/7, with 6,550 trains over more than 7,000 kilometers of track. The railway network is rightly the beating heart of the mobile Netherlands.

ProRail is working on the accessibility of the Netherlands by ensuring an optimal rail network. We distribute the capacity on the track, regulate all train traffic, build and manage stations and

lay new tracks. ProRail also maintains existing infrastructure such as the track, switches, signalling and level crossings.

For the construction and maintenance of the tracks, ProRail needs approximately 500,000 tons of railway ballast per year. In order to realize the ambition to switch completely to quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast, ProRail needs approximately 750,000 tons of this ballast. This capacity is currently (August 2022) far from available.

1.2 Ambition: in time to switch to quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast

The health of our employees, that of the railway workers and people in the immediate vicinity is very important to ProRail. We work together with the industry to fulfill the task of ensuring a safe and accessible track. To mitigate the risk of quartz dust, we have taken many measures together with the industry. This concerns technological and individual measures such as keeping ballast wet, deploying the SALT (StofArme LosTrein = Low-Dust Discharge Train) and the use of mouth caps (respiratory protection).

ProRail can do more to further reduce exposure to quartz dust. However, quartz-less ballast appears to be very limited. At the same time, every step taken towards working without quartz is accompanied by complex and far-reaching measures that have a major impact on the entire industry and society. That is why ProRail opts for a controlled and phased approach in which relevant stakeholders are actively involved.

A transition to quartz-less ballast therefore has a lot of impact on business operations. Expansion of the scope (currently only tunnels and roofs because dust can accumulate there) depends on the results of the studies into the availability of quartz-less ballast and discussions about this with the relevant stakeholders.

ProRail's ambition is to gain insight in the short term into the availability of quartz-free (and asbestos-free) railway ballast and to adjust policy accordingly. For this year 2022, ProRail has decided to use the scarce quartz-less ballast that is available in railway tunnels and under station roofs. Preliminary working definition for 'under the roof' is where ballast does not get wet when it is raining.

ProRail's ambition is to switch completely to quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast within a few years. However, it seems so far that quartz-less ballast is very scarce. It is possible that the required quantity of an estimated 750,000 tons will not be available within a few years. Therefore, in addition to quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast, this market consultation also focuses on rocks with a minimal content of quartz. We are thinking here of a quartz percentage (determined with QXRD) of a maximum of 10%.

1.3 Scope

The market research into the availability of quartz-less (and asbestos-free) railway ballast focuses on rocks that are suitable as railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353, but also rocks that, contrary to the requirement of 0% crystalline silica, demonstrably contain a maximum of 10% quartz (low percentage of quartz), or rocks that are quartzless or contain a low percentage of quartz that cannot meet all the requirements of SPC00353 (for example, rock hardness, water absorption or resistance to freeze-thaw cycles). The rocks must always be asbestos-free, otherwise we introduce another problem with a health risk.

1.4 Problems or dilemmas

The requirements of SPC00353 that the quartz-free (and asbestos-free) ballast must meet provide ProRail with a high-quality material. We want to maintain that level. That means a lifespan of the ballast of approximately 30 to 50 years, depending on the load class used.

However, we also want to receive information from rocks that cannot fully meet all these requirements. An application for a lower load class can then possibly be found if the capacity in accordance with SPC00353 falls far short of the annual requirement. It may also be possible that certain properties compensate each other.

The same also applies to rocks that contain relatively little quartz (<10% m/m based on QXRD).

We expect that all documents, communication, consultations, etc. can be delivered or conducted in Dutch or English. To this end, ProRail has also had the SPC00353 parts 1 and 2 translated into English. A Dutch and English version of these two documents are therefore available.

The Soil Quality Decree applies in the Netherlands. Demonstrating whether a rock/quarry meets these requirements takes time and money. There may also be such decisions in the countries with the potential rock. Foreign documents can then serve as a first indication of whether one can comply with the Soil Quality Decree. This can be assessed internally by our LJV department. Ultimately, all rocks/quarries must comply with the Soil Quality Decree.

1.5 Reading guide

This is a market consultation for rocks suitable as railway ballast that contribute to the reduction of respirable quartz dust or even reduce this to zero. ProRail wants to prevent the risk of exposure to respirable quartz dust and, if that is not possible, reduce it to as low a level as possible. ProRail is therefore looking for sufficient capacity of suitable rocks to fulfill this ambition.

One of the possible solutions that is being considered is the use of rocks that can be demonstrated with QXRD to contain no crystalline silica (among which quartz) and also no asbestos (detection with SEM/EDX). However, it seems that these rocks are scarce, which is why rocks with a relatively low content of quartz (<10% m/m) can also contribute to limiting the risk of exposure to respirable quartz dust.

This document describes the process by which ProRail invites parties to participate.

Chapter 2 discusses the market consultation in more detail and a questionnaire is drawn up and explained.

Chapter 3 describes the steps to be taken for each phase of the market consultation, which documents the parties must submit and how all submitted documents will be assessed by ProRail.

The planning is included in chapter 4 and an overview of the appendices is given in chapter 5.

2 Explanation of market consultation and questionnaire

As mentioned, ProRail has a need for new railway ballast of approximately 500,000 tons per year. If this ballast is to be completely quartz-free, the required capacity is approximately 750,000 tons per year. This is because the use of recycled ballast and reused ballast (both contain relatively much quartz) is then no longer

possible. This recycled ballast and reused ballast have a quartz content of between 15% and 45%, depending on origin.

Several exposure studies have established that without mitigating measures (mainly wet processing of the ballast and respiratory protection) the legal limit value of 0.075 mg/m³ for respirable crystalline silica can be exceeded. This does depend on a number of factors, such as the initial value of the content of very fine particles when it is distributed at the quarry, the transport and the transport distance, the amount of operations (transshipment, depot, the method of processing in the job and the duration of the worker's exposure). The wet processing of the railway ballast significantly mitigates the risk of exposure, however water is not always available (think of the drought in the summer and the ban on the use of surface water) and at times in winters, this water will freeze at sub-zero temperatures.

In order to have absolutely no risk of exposure to respirable quartz, it is therefore necessary to use rocks suitable as railway ballast that do not contain quartz.

However, because there is also a legal limit value for the content of respirable asbestos dust, in addition to the fact that the rock must be free of crystalline silica, it is also required that the rock is free of asbestos. With rocks that contain no quartz (crystalline silica) and no asbestos, the risk of exposure to quartz and asbestos is not present.

In the Netherlands there are no suitable rocks that can be used as railway ballast. This means that all railway ballast that meets the ProRail requirements (SPC) is taken from abroad. This market consultation has been drawn up in order to gain a more complete insight into the availability of quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast, or railway ballast with relatively little quartz (<10% m/m) and asbestos-free. From ProRail's own investigations, completely quartz-free and asbestos-free ballast appears to be very scarce.

2.4 Determination of the quartz content (QXRD)

A generally accepted and established method to determine the composition of a rock is by means of grinding plates and examining them with an (electron) microscope. However, this method can give a wrong image of a massif in a quarry, on the one hand because it concerns only a few pieces of rock that are examined and on the other hand because with the microscope not all minerals and substances can be detected in the rock. In consultation with external experts (TNO, DEKRA, SGS-Intron and Qmineral), ProRail ultimately opted for the quantitative X-ray diffraction (QXRD) method. This method is clearly described in SPC00353 parts 1 and 2, which have been added to this market consultation as appendices 1 and 2. The determination of the quartz content in the rock must be carried out according to this method from SPC00353 on a representative sample based on a sampling plan and a sampling report in accordance with NEN-EN 932-1 (nl) September 1996 (see also SPC00353).

2.5 Determination of the asbestos content (SEM/EDX)

In consultation with external experts (TNO, DEKRA, SGS-Intron and Qmineral), ProRail has determined the method for determining the absence of asbestos by scanning with an electron microscope, whereby the surface structure of the sample can be determined in detail in combination with an X-ray microanalysis in which the composition of the sample can be determined. This combination is summarized in the term SEM/EDX. This method is clearly described in the SPC00353 parts 1 and 2. The determination of the asbestos content in the rock must be determined according to this method from the SPC00353 on a representative sample on the basis of a sampling plan and a sampling report in accordance with the NEN EN 932-1 (nl) September 1996 (see also the SPC00353).

This means that air measurements in a quarry are not necessary, after all, if there is no asbestos in the rock, it cannot be present in the air. This saves costs and time.

2.6 Possible results of market consultation

In this market consultation it is difficult to predict what the ultimate results will be. Naturally, ProRail hopes that sufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free rocks are available that are suitable as railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353. But the search for this product is difficult and the result to date does not give a positive picture. ProRail assumes that the product is very scarce. The following possible outcomes are taken into account for the market consultation:

1. There is more than enough quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353 available,
2. Insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353 is available,
3. Insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353 is available, but quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast is available that does not fully comply with SPC00353,
4. Insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast is available according to 1, 2 and 3, which means that rocks with a relatively low quartz content ($< 10\%$ m/m according to QXRD) that are asbestos-free must be considered.

Addition 1: If it appears that more than sufficient potential quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast is available in accordance with SPC00353, ProRail will further stimulate and facilitate the process of having quarries certified in accordance with SPC00353. This includes having the quartz and asbestos content determined on a representative sample taken under the supervision of ProRail or a third independent body by and at the expense of ProRail. In addition, it will be determined whether a tender (framework contract) is required for the required guarantee on deliveries.

It is then no longer necessary to go into further detail about other rocks that do not meet all the requirements of SPC00353. The results 2, 3 and 4 are then discarded.

Addition 2: If it appears that insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast is available in accordance with SPC00353, ProRail will further stimulate and facilitate the process of having these scarce quarries certified in accordance with SPC00353. This includes having the quartz and asbestos content determined on a representative sample taken under the supervision of ProRail or a third independent body by and at the expense of ProRail. In addition, it will be determined whether a tender (framework contract) is required for the required guarantee on deliveries.

Because the required need cannot be covered by ProRail, the results of 3 and 4 will be examined further.

Addition 3: If it appears that insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast is available in accordance with SPC00353, ProRail will examine which rocks are quartz-free and asbestos-free, but cannot meet all other requirements from SPC00353. The consequences of this will have to be looked at more closely in terms of lifespan. Here too, ProRail facilitates the determination of the quartz and asbestos content on a representative sample taken under the supervision of ProRail or a third independent body by and at the expense of ProRail.

ProRail will also investigate how the scarce railway ballast that does fully comply with SPC00353 can be guaranteed for maximum capacity in deliveries by determining whether a tender (framework contract) is necessary. This also applies to the quartz-free and asbestos-free rocks that do not fully meet all other

requirements from SPC00353. If it appears from the market consultation that result 3 is the only feasible option for ProRail, the SPC00353 will be adjusted accordingly. If result 3 covers ProRail's needs, result 4 is not applicable.

Addition 4: If insufficient quartz-free and asbestos-free rocks are available, deviation of the legal requirement, to look first at a rock in which the harmful substance (crystalline silica) is not present, is in order, because than it is allowed to look at a rock in which the amount of harmful substance (crystalline silica) is so low that it is less harmful to health when exposed.

ProRail has estimated on the basis of dust simulation tests that the content of crystalline silica may then be a maximum of 10%, whereby the outcome of the dust simulation tests will be decisive for any admission of the rock. To this end, the dust simulation test must be performed and a limit value for respirable crystalline dust must still be established. ProRail also indicates that there is no clear relationship between the crystalline silica content in the rock and the emission of respirable quartz dust in the dust simulation test. In other words, a rock with, for example, 2% quartz could, for example, emit more respirable quartz dust in the dust simulation test than a rock with, for example, 5% quartz.

For potential rocks with a relatively low quartz content, ProRail also facilitates the determination of the quartz and asbestos content on a representative sample taken under the supervision of ProRail or a third independent body by and at the expense of ProRail.

If it appears from the market consultation that result 4 is the only feasible option for ProRail, the SPC00353 will be adjusted accordingly.

2.7 Determining quartz content, asbestos content and dust simulation tests

Depending on the market consultation, one of the results 1 to 4 will be applied by ProRail. The potential rocks/quarries are facilitated by ProRail by having the investigations to determine the quartz content and the asbestos content carried out at ProRail's expense and on behalf of ProRail. To do this, the samples must be taken under the supervision of ProRail or a third independent body. The costs of this sampling are also for ProRail.

ProRail also wants to have dust simulations carried out for all potential rocks/quarries by TNO. ProRail also facilitates this by having this carried out on its own behalf and at its own expense.

The only costs for the market are the shipping costs of the samples (in total approx. 60 kg of railway ballast) to the laboratories to be designated by ProRail. .

For all rocks, it continues to apply that no asbestos may be detected in the rock.

2.8 Applicable Regulations and Standards

See SPC00353 parts 1 and 2 (including the underlying standards) that have been added as appendix 1 and appendix 2.

2.9 Questionnaire

In order to determine to what extent ProRail can eventually switch completely to quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast, or whether it is necessary to also use railway ballast with a low quartz content, we request that you complete the following questions in the attached Excel file (appendix 3). Based on the answers, it can be determined which result as described under section 2.6 will apply.

The questions from the Excel file are also included in sections 2.10 to 2.18. You are requested to use the attached Excel file to give your answers.

In addition, attachments with your documentation can be included. You must refer to these attachments in the questionnaire, stating the document reference.

2.10 Quartz-free and asbestos-free rocks

1. Are you familiar with rocks that demonstrably contain no crystalline silica (quartz, tridymite and cristobalite), and if so can you indicate where they can be found (country/province/location and rock name)?
2. Can you indicate whether the locations and rocks mentioned under question 1 are also free of asbestos?

2.11 Low quartz-containing (< 10% m/m) and asbestos-free rock

3. Are you familiar with rocks that are demonstrably low in quartz (< 10% m/m crystalline silica), and if so can you indicate where they can be found (country/province/location and rock name)?
4. Can you indicate whether the locations and rocks mentioned under question 3 are also free of asbestos?

2.12 Quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast

5. Can you indicate whether aggregates are produced for industry (asphalt industry, concrete industry, ceramic industry, etc.) within the locations mentioned under question 1 and question 2?
6. Can you indicate whether railway ballast is produced for the national railway company within the locations mentioned under questions 1 and 2?
7. Can you indicate whether the production locations mentioned under question 6 produce or can produce railway ballast for ProRail on the basis of the SPC00353?
8. Can you indicate to which requirements from SPC00353 the production locations mentioned under question 6, which produce quartz-less and asbestos-free railway ballast, but which do not fully comply with the other requirements from SPC00353, deviate from?

2.13 Low quartz (< 10% m/m) and asbestos-free railway ballast

9. Can you indicate whether aggregates are produced for industry (asphalt industry, concrete industry, ceramic industry, etc.) within the locations mentioned under question 3 and question 4?
10. Can you indicate whether railway ballast is produced for the national railway company within the locations mentioned under questions 3 and 4?
11. Can you indicate whether the production locations mentioned under question 10 produce or can produce railway ballast for ProRail on the basis of the SPC00353, if the quartz requirement of 0% is replaced by a maximum of 10%?
12. Can you indicate on which requirements from SPC00353 the production locations mentioned under question 10, which produce railway ballast for the national railway company and have a maximum quartz content of 10% (m/m), but which do not fully meet the other requirements from SPC00353, differ?

2.14 Railway ballast capacity for ProRail

13. Can you indicate what the annual capacity could be for ProRail for the quarries/locations mentioned under question:
- 7: quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353,
 - 8: Quartz-less and asbestos-free railway ballast with deviations (other than requirements for quartz and asbestos) on the SPC00353,
 - 11: quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353, if the quartz requirement of 0% is replaced by a maximum of 10%),
 - 12: quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast in accordance with SPC00353, if the quartz requirement of 0% is replaced by a maximum of 10%, but with deviations from other requirements?
14. Can you indicate within what period and conditions the specified annual capacity under 7, 8, 11 and 12 would be available?

2.15 Documentation

To determine the potential of the rock/location/quarry as railway ballast, you are requested to send a number of documents with the Excel questionnaire. This concerns the following documents if available:

- a. Mineralogical and petrographic description of the rock by an external party,
 - b. Geographical overview/report of the quarry and mining areas,
 - c. Report demonstrating the content of crystalline silica and by which method,
 - d. Report demonstrating the asbestos content and by which method,
 - e. Production data that are relevant for the market consultation (think of the requirements from SPC00353),
 - f. Proposed mode of transport of the railway ballast to the Netherlands (boat, wagon truck or combinations),
 - g. Any other document that may be of interest in the eyes of the market.
15. Can you indicate which documentation you provide with the questionnaire for which question and do you want to provide it with a clear reference number?
16. Would you like to explicitly state what is competitively sensitive for you in the answers to the questions and the accompanying documentation?

2.16 Miscellaneous

17. After proven suitability as a potential supplier, are you prepared to supply samples for the determination of the quartz content, asbestos content and determination of the dust simulation?
18. Are you willing to bear the costs of sending the samples as mentioned under question 15?
19. Does the location/quarry/producer specified by you have a washing installation for the supply of railway ballast?

2.17 Risks and Opportunities

20. What risks do you see in the intended purpose of ProRail (see chapter 1) and for yourself?
21. What opportunities do you have in the intended goal of ProRail (see chapter 1) and for yourself?

2.18 Additional comments and/or suggestions

22. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

3 Market consultation procedure

3.1 We are looking for "healthy" railway ballast!

With this market consultation, ProRail expects to gain a good picture of the available capacity of quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast (healthy railway ballast) that is currently being produced, as well as an insight into which capacity fully (or partly) complies with our SPC00353. In addition, we expect to get a good picture of available railway ballast with a relatively low quartz content (< 10% m/m). Depending on the results (see section 2.6), this may lead to a tender.

3.2 Procedure

This market consultation has been published on (among others) TenderNed as an open market consultation. This means that all parties in the market are given the opportunity to participate.

If the answers given are unclear or raise follow-up questions, ProRail can ask for clarification afterwards .

A summary is made of the results of the market consultation in which the main conclusions are recorded. In any case, no competitively sensitive information will be shared in this report. This document will be shared with all participants afterwards and - if applicable - will be attached to the tender dossier of any future tender procedure for information. Where ProRail deems it possible and useful, the conclusions will be implemented in the tender file and/or the tender procedure.

The market consultation consists of two steps:

1. Written: answering the questions (see chapter 2, paragraph 2.9 to 2.18);
2. Individual follow-up meeting with (some of) the market parties that have responded .

Market parties are requested to register for participation in this market consultation in writing, before the date mentioned in paragraph 3.3, at the following e-mail address: menno.bronswijk@prorail.nl. Secondly, you are requested to submit the attached questionnaire by e-mail before the date mentioned in paragraph 3.3.3.

ProRail will then analyze the responses and on that basis ProRail can determine whether to plan a follow-up meeting with all or part of the parties. This scales down according to the expected results in the order of 1 to 4.4.

This means, for example, that if the result is 1 (there is more than enough quartz-free and asbestos-free railway ballast available in accordance with SPC00353), only those potential parties will be approached for a follow-up meeting. With result 2/3, ProRail will also approach potential parties of quartz-less and asbestos-free railway ballast that do not fully comply with SPC00353. With result 4, ProRail will also approach potential parties that can supply railway ballast with a relatively low quartz content.

A report will be made of each individual meeting and submitted to the participating party for approval. Subsequently, ProRail will make one integral (anonymised) report of all conversations, in which the most important conclusions from the written responses and the conversations will be recorded. In any case, no competitively sensitive information will be shared in this report. A draft of this document will then be sent to all participants in the consultation with the request to read the document and pass on any comments to ProRail. After all participants have had the opportunity to submit comments, the document will be definitively adopted by ProRail. The final document will be attached for information to the tender dossier of any future tendering

procedure. Where ProRail deems it possible and useful, the conclusions will be implemented in the tender file and/or the tender.

3.3 Schedule

Date	Activity
August 31, 2022	Publication / invitation to participate in the market consultation by ProRail
September 15, 2022	Until this date, you have the opportunity to ask questions about the market consultation in writing
September 23, 2022	Until this date, ProRail has the time to answer the questions in writing
September 30, 2022	Closing market consultation, last day to submit the questionnaire
October 7, 2022	Deadline for ProRail for questions clarifying the answers to the questionnaire
October 15, 2022	Latest date for answering questions from ProRail
October 15 to 23, 2022	Scheduling and holding individual follow-up meetings
October 23, 2022	Send draft report to market consultation participants
October 30, 2022	Send final report to market consultation participants

3.4 Contact

For questions about and to register for this market consultation, please contact:

Menno Bronswijk

menno.bronswijk@prorail.nl

0031 6 18 72 90 06

3.5 Open and honest

Participation in the market consultation is entirely voluntary and will not lead to any privileges in any tender. Likewise, not participating in the market consultation will not lead to exclusion from any tender.

By participating in this market consultation, you agree that the information you provide may be used by ProRail in (the preparation of) the tender. Commercial (numerical) information provided by you will be treated confidentially by ProRail.

ProRail attaches great importance to a transparent process. It is not the intention to favor participating market parties in the market consultation or to put non-participating parties at a disadvantage. From this perspective, all relevant information resulting from the market consultation will be made available to all potential tenderers upon publication of the tender or added to the tender dossier..

Any costs for participating in this market consultation will not be reimbursed.

4 Appendices

- Appendix 1: SPC00353-1 V001 e: Aggregates for quartzless railway ballast - Ballast free of crystalline silica and asbestos.
- Appendix 2: SPC00353-2 V001 e: Aggregates for quartzless railway ballast - Ballast free of crystalline silica and asbestos – Clarification.
- Appendix 3: Market consultation Railway Ballast Questionnaire v1.0 ENG (Excel file).