The Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ, part of NWO-I) intends to award a public supply contract to Exail SAS, Brest (France). The contract covers 55 Oceano R1 acoustic releases with accessories, for the National Marine Facilities (NMF) and RIF HERSTEL. The estimated value is €363,118.50 excluding VAT.

NIOZ is using the negotiated procedure without prior publication because, for technical reasons, only one economic operator can perform the contract.

NMF has an operational acoustic release system. It consists of deck units, a transducer built permanently into the drop keel of RV Anna Weber-van Bosse, and a pop-up recovery system that NMF developed and validated offshore. The recovery system is designed around the dimensions and control of these releases. The releases to be supplied will expand this system.

The releases are commanded, ranged and monitored by telemetry through a specific acoustic protocol. The existing deck units and ship's transducer cannot control releases from other manufacturers. Those releases also would not fit the recovery system without a major redesign and new offshore validation.

NIOZ carried out a market survey among suppliers of acoustic releases. It showed that no other supplier offers releases compatible with the existing deck units, the ship's transducer and the recovery system. Exail supplies these releases directly. Another make would mean replacing the deck units and the ship's transducer and redesigning the recovery system. The alternative would be to run two incompatible systems on board at the same time. That would raise the risk of operating errors and of losing scientific instruments at sea. When the deck units or the ship's transducer are replaced in the future, NIOZ will go back to the market.