

Dear colleagues,

Are several months now, that a number of people who frequently use LabCafé have dedicated time to investigating the tender related to the company that operates it: Eurest Catalunya.

We have requested the relevant documentation from the Consorci PRBB, the contracting authority, and have read it carefully. Based on our review, we believe that consumers are being unfairly affected.

In response to the growing public dissatisfaction, the trade unions had already raised their concerns on several occasions, without any effective action having been taken.

It is important to note that complaints are addressed to the Consorci PRBB because it is the contracting authority and is responsible for carrying out periodic reviews of the service, as established in the tender documents on pages 9–10, section 4.3.1:

- “The person responsible for the service shall hold regular meetings with the persons responsible for the contract at the Consorci PRBB. These meetings shall be used to monitor the service, compliance with the contractual conditions [...] The person responsible for the service shall be responsible for submitting a quarterly summary report on the service [...] The contractor shall appoint a quality manager [...] who shall respond to complaints from users of the service.”

Eurest Catalunya is the local subsidiary associated with Eurest S.L., a company belonging to the multinational Compass Group PLC, which has a significant presence in the contract catering sector, including services provided to public institutions. The company has specialised resources dedicated to identifying public procurement opportunities and participating in tendering processes.

The contract catering sector is highly concentrated and includes several large international groups, such as Compass Group, Sodexo and other companies of a similar scale. These companies regularly participate in public tenders and, in some cases, obtain high scores in the evaluation processes. This situation can make it more difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises to compete in certain procedures, as they generally have fewer resources available for this type of process.

It is also relevant to consider the corporate and financial structure of Compass Group PLC and the international scale of the company, as this provides a broader context for understanding the business environment in which Eurest Catalunya operates¹.

The tender agreement signed between the Consorci PRBB and Eurest establishes a series of agreed maximum prices that may not be exceeded, as well as other quality and service requirements that we have compared against our experience as consumers.

Once the context of public procurement and the companies participating in these procedures has been explained, we can focus on the main point of our analysis: compliance with the conditions established in the tender.

1. [La telaraña de BlackRock: del genocidio israelí al mercado inmobiliario español](https://www.ctxt.es/la-telara%C3%B1a-de-blackrock-del-genocidio-israel%C3%AD-al-mercado-inmobiliario-espa%C3%B1ol) | ctxt.es

The prices

The prices must be publicly displayed. Below are the actual prices:

LISTA DE PREUS LAB CAFÈ

MENÚ Do It / Poke + Pa + Postre	8.00 €	BEGUDES	
MENÚ Pasta + Pa + Postre	8.00 €	Aigua mineral	1.10 €
MENÚ Nomad + Pa + Postre	8.00 €	Aigua amb gas	1.50 €
Crema de verdures	2.70€	Refrescos 330ml	1.90 €
		Cervesa	2.00 €
COMBOS		Sucs envasats	1.90 €
COMBO DOLÇ	2.25 €	Suc de taronja natural	2.50 €
BRIOXERIA + CAFÈ / INFUSIÓ	3.05 €	CAFÈS	
COMBO SALAT		Cafè sol	1.20 €
ENTREPÀ FRED CLÀSSIC / TORRADA + CAFÈ / INFUSIÓ	3.50 €	Cafè tallat	1.25 €
COMBO CALENT		Cafè amb llet	1.40 €
ENTREPÀ CALENT + CAFÈ / INFUSIÓ	3.80 €	Cafè amb llet	1.70 €
COMBO PREMIUM		Cafè americà	1.50 €
ENTREPÀ PREMIUM / BRIOXERIA PREMIUM + CAFÈ / INFUSIÓ		Colacao	1.20 €
XURROS AMB XOCOLATA I CAFÈ		TE I INFUSIONS	
BRIOXERIA	1.30 €	POSTRE	1.30 €
Croissant	1.40 €	Peça de fruita	1.80 €
Croissant de xocolata	1.50 €	Fruita tallada	1.40 €
Croissant de llavors	1.90 €	Postre del dia	2.20 €
Croissant de pernil i formatge	1.40 €	Porció de postre	
Napolitana de crema	1.30 €	SUPLEMENTS	
Palmera	1.30 €	Tapas got Take Away	0.10 €
Donut	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	0.20 €
Donut de xocolata	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	0.50 €
Muffin	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	0.75€
Cookie	1.80 €	Regenda vegetal	1.10€
Berlina	3.00€	Regenda vegetal	2.20€
Brioixeria envasada sense gluten		Regenda vegetal	2.80€
xurros & xocolata/pancake/creppes		Regenda vegetal	2.80€
ENTREPÀ PULGUETA	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De fruita	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De formatge	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De tonyina	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De gall dindi	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De pernil i formatge	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De pernil serrà	1.50 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
De fruita espanyola/llavors/llardons	1.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
ENTREPÀ PREMIUM	3.80€	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
Gall dindi, roscua i formatge	3.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
Sobresassat i brio	3.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
Pernil serrà i brio	3.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
Pollastre, ensaïmada i formatge	3.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€
Llomb, formatge i postres	3.80 €	Regenda vegetal	2.80€

And these are the menu prices agreed upon in Annex II of the tender.

GRUP IX (Combinats esmorzars)	IMPORT+IVA
Combinat 1. Bagel o torrada o entrepà fred clàssic / o mediterrani (meitat) i cafè	3,05 €
Combinat 2. Bagel o torrada o entrepà calent clàssic (meitat) i cafè	3,50 €
Combinat 3. Pasta (croissant, magdalena, ensaimada, xuxos, Donuts, etc.) o torrada de pa amb mantega i melmelada i cafè	2,25 €
Combinat 4. Entrepà Gourmet o premium i cafè o brioxeria Gourmet (muffins, popdosts, Carrot Cake, etc.) i cafè	3,80 €
Suplement per suc natural	1,40 €
GRUPO X (Combinats plats dia)	IMPORT+IVA
Combinat 1. Plat calent de pasta o plat calent del dia i postres	5,95 €
Combinat 2. Amanida 1 o crema o sopa i plat calent del dia o plat calent pasta més postres	8,00 €
Combinat 3. Amanida 1 o crema o sopa i torrada Premium mes postres	6,95 €
Pa i postres	1,50 €
Pa, postres i beguda	3,00 €
Suplement del cafè afegit a un plat del dia	0,80 €

GRUP VIII (PLATS DEL DIA)	IMPORT+IVA
Torrades normals	2,20 €
Torrades premium	2,90 €
Sopes i cremes calentes	3,40 €
Sopes i cremes fredes	3,25 €
Amanida del dia 1 (base fulles verdes) + ingredients	4,00 €
Amanida del dia 2 (base pasta /arros/ bulgur)+ ingredients	5,00 €
Amanida del dia 3 (base llegum) + ingredients	5,50 €
Plat de pasta calenta	5,05 €
Plat calent del dia	5,80 €
Panadilles	2,60 €
Wraps	4,20 €
Quiche	3,80 €
Focaccia	4,50 €

As for the salads, there are options priced at €4, €5, and €5.50, with no indication that the choice of added ingredients is restricted. In reality, this offer does not exist; instead, a mandatory €8 charge is applied to include bread and dessert—even though adding the €1.50 cost for bread and dessert (seen in "Group X") to the base prices results in totals of €5.50, €6.50, and €7.00, respectively, rather than €8. The offer for an individual dish also does not exist, and once again, the price does not match the sum of the base price (€5.05 or €5.80) and the €1.50 for bread and dessert.

First of all, by fact the only menu offered is priced at €8 and consists of a salad or main dish with bread and dessert. An additional €2 is charged if you wish to add a cream soup.

It is also stated that the breakfast sandwiches are not even as small as the ones currently offered, but are supposed to be medium-sized. The Iberian ham sandwich, moreover, is served with a rather small portion of bread at a price of €3.50.

Other prices or offers listed in Annex II include, for example:

	TENDER PRICE	ACTUAL PRICE
Fresh juice supplement:	€1.40	€2.20
Coffee supplement (menu):	€0.80	€1.10
Premium cold sandwich:	€3.00	€3.50
Mixed juices:	€3.00	Offer not available
Smoothies	€3.50	Offer not available
Kombucha	€3.00	Offer not available
Yoghurt with toppings	€2.80	Offer not available
Piece of fruit	€0.90	€1.30
Plant-based drink	included	€0.20 supplement
Soup	included in the menu	€2.00 supplement
Sparkling water (0.5 L):	€1.30	€1.50
Packaged juices:	€1.80	€1.90

In general, we found that the prices are inflated. This is not only the case in the cafeteria, but also in the vending machines, which are also managed by the same company. These are the prices established in Annex III:

Begudes calentes

Descripció article	PVP
Càpsula BLUE-LAVAZZA	0,900
Cafè Natural gra.	0,630
Descafeinat soluble/gra	0,630
Xocolata begudes / mescla	0,630
Cafè Just/Sostenible	0,630
Cafè Ecològic	0,675

Begudes fredes i productes sòlids

Descripció article	PVP
Donuts xocolata 94gr.	1,710
Barrita crocante de semillas calabaza Natur.L.ECO	1,710
Barrita Crujiente Calabaza 25gr.Veritas	1,710
Batido ColaCao Shake	1,485
Coca-Cola Zero 0.5L. Ampolla	1,440
Fanta Taronja o Llimona 0.5 Ampolla	1,440
Coca-Cola 0.5L Ampolla	1,440
Snack Maiz Romero Fiorentini 50Gr.L.ECO	1,440
Patatas Fritas con piel Natur.40gr.L.ECO	1,440
Snack Maiz Romero Fiorentini 50Gr.	1,440
Snatts Nueces Naturales 38gr.	1,350
Xiclet Senses Tropical / Hierbabuena	1,350
Haribo Favoritos 90gr	1,305
Aquarius Llauna 33cc.	1,260
Kinder Bueno 43gr.	1,260
Pantera Rosa Bossa 2u.	1,260
Tigreton 100gr Bossa 2u.	1,260
Palitos Integrales Natur.50gr. L.ECO	1,260
Grissini Integral 50gr.	1,260
Mikado Mikado Negre 39gr.24u./c.	1,215
M&M's cacahuete 45gr.	1,215
Snatt's Veggies / Snatt's Natuchips 30gr.	1,170
Phoskitos	1,080

Mini Digestive Xoco 100gr.	1,080
Filipinos Xoco 75 gr.	1,080
Socialis Cereales Sin Gluten	1,080
Bi Frutas Mediterráneo Zero 33ml.	0,990
Schweppes Tònica Llauna 33cc.	0,990
Bollycaos 67gr.	0,990
Patata Ruffles Jamón Matutano	0,990
Regalèssia Vermella Tobosines 54gr.	0,990
Galetes Campana Elgorriaga 180gr.	0,990
Tortitas Nackis Mediterráneo 25gr.	0,990
Coca-Cola Llauna 33cc.	0,945
Coca Cola Zero 33cc.	0,945
Schweppes Llimona / Taronja Llauna 33cc.	0,945
Sprite Llauna 33cc.	0,945
Kit-Kat	0,900
Palmera Xocolata Alba 80gr.	0,900
Oreo 66gr.	0,900
Patata Boca-Bits Matutano	0,900
Patata Ondulada Frit Ravich	0,900
Bastó Pipas Velarte 50gr.	0,900
Palito Integral Velarte 50gr	0,900
Palito aceite Velarte 50gr	0,900
Diet Fibra Muesli / Xoco 75gr.	0,900
Barrita Cereals Socialis Leche	0,900
Diet Nature Bar.Vainilla 70gr.	0,900
Diet Nature Soja y Xoco 24gr.	0,900
Huesitos Original 40gr.	0,900
Digestive Poma Go 43gr.	0,900
Milka Oreo 37gr.	0,900
Bicentury Xoco.Taronja & Flor azahar	0,900
Krititas Galetes Salades 40gr.	0,810
Princesa 40gr.	0,810
Aigua Font Vella 0.5L.	0,765
Cóctel Real 50Gr.(Golodolç)	0,720
Galetes Xoco Elgorriaga 60gr.	0,720

Can we say that there is an additional charge or a price increase that was previously agreed upon?

There has been no modification to the tender. In fact, this is what is stated on page 29, section 5:

- *"The contractor may not apply prices higher than the maximum prices established for products considered to be basic products, as set out in Annex II of the Specific Technical Specifications."*
- *"The contractor shall be required to make available to users all the items listed in the price list included as Annex II to the Specific Technical Specifications. These items shall be considered 'basic' products."*

Therefore, the published price list does not correspond to the prices established in the tender.

In addition to the price list, the tender also explicitly states that certain items, such as glasses and cutlery, must be freely available for users, as indicated on pages 6 and 13.

- *"The LabCafè is freely accessible and available for use both by users of the cafeteria service (consumers) and by PRBB residents who bring their own food in lunch boxes or using other utensils or means. They are permitted to use the water fountains, microwave ovens and furniture at no cost. They may also use the cutlery and glasses, which will be available to them in the office area and which the contractor is required to manage, wash and maintain in perfect condition, both in terms of cleanliness, appearance and quantity, carrying out all necessary replacements without being able to charge the Consorci PRBB any amount for this."*
- *"...[the] glasses and [the] cutlery which must remain available to users..."*

In contrast, these items are removed and handed individually to each consumer in a fully controlled manner. Furthermore, users who do not make a purchase are also charged for them.

Opening hours

According to page 7 of the tender, the opening hours should be as follows:

- *"The cafeteria service shall operate continuously from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. During the month of August, during the weeks in which the cafeteria service is operated only from the kiosk, the opening hours shall be from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m."*

Not only does the cafeteria close earlier than the hours established in the tender, but it also remains closed throughout the entire month of August, forcing people to go elsewhere for lunch.

Eurest does not pay rent for using the LabCafé premises to generate revenue, in return for providing a service to PRBB employees. Closing the cafeteria for an entire month and leaving employees without this service does not appear to be consistent with the contractor's obligations under the tender.

- *"The opening hours indicated above for both the LabCafè area and the outdoor Kiosk area shall remain in force for as long as the needs of the service do not require them to*

be modified. These opening hours may be modified by mutual agreement between the contractor and the Consorci PRBB according to the service requirements."

The service hours are regulated according to users' needs. However, the cafeteria cannot be used during the afternoons throughout the year, nor is it open at all during the month of August, even though there are still employees working at the PRBB. It is therefore difficult to reconcile the closure with the assumption that there is no need for the service during this period.

As a result, users have to go elsewhere to purchase food and drinks, for example to the surrounding establishments at Hospital del Mar, which remain open. In this respect, LabCafé appears to be the only service operating under such restricted hours.

It may be assumed that the month of August is used to provide holidays for the cafeteria staff. However, the tender includes an obligation to assign sufficient staff to the service whenever there continues to be demand.

Quality of the service

Waiting times and long queues: There is not only an insufficient number of staff, but also a lack of staff during peak hours, when demand is highest. Queues can extend outside the LabCafé. We often see only one or two people trying to meet the demand, resulting in considerable waiting times. This is what is stated on page 13, section 4.4:

- "The number of staff assigned to the contract must always be sufficient to adapt to the number of users. For this reason, an SLA for 'queue time' is established, under which users may not have to wait more than 8 minutes for their service, from the time they join the service queue until they leave with their order already paid for. If this time is exceeded, a penalty of €300 shall be applied for each group of 10 people waiting for more than 8 minutes. [...] Under no circumstances may users have to wait more than eight minutes to be attended to and served."

Given how frequently this situation occurs, it is unclear whether these penalties are being applied. We do not consider this to be the responsibility of the staff, who are already working under considerable pressure. For this reason, we believe that the issue is primarily one of insufficient staffing.

Vegetarian and vegan options

Regarding the variety of options available for vegetarian and vegan users, this is one of the most frequently raised complaints. No vegetarian or vegan option is offered for breakfast. At lunchtime, the salad options contain very little protein, while the alternative is the pasta option, when it is available on that particular day.

Despite this, the tender refers repeatedly to the commitment to providing vegetarian and vegan options:

- *"Likewise, an alternative range of dishes shall be offered for those groups who, due to health reasons, food intolerances, preferences or other circumstances, require ingredients suited to their needs (coeliac disease, allergies to certain products, vegans and vegetarians)."*

- *"The contractor must promote the purchase of locally sourced products, incorporating more plant-based products and fewer foods of animal origin into the offering..."*
- *"The contractor shall always ensure that these variations are based on vegetarian and vegan options."*

However, there is also no option to request a vegan meal prepared to order, again because the kitchen staff are not available to provide this service.

Other relevant considerations include the additional charge for plant-based milk and the price of €1.30 for a single piece of fruit. These do not appear to be consistent with a strong commitment to vegetarian or healthy consumption.

Food quality

The regulations regarding food quality are also specified in section 4.6:

- *"The contractor must ensure that the products offered as part of the food service are of the highest quality, purchasing products from leading brands and fresh products from local suppliers."*
- *"Vegetables and produce should preferably be fresh, seasonal and locally sourced whenever possible. Bread must be offered in different varieties, with at least the following available: white bread, wholemeal bread, seeded bread and gluten-free bread. This bread must be baked daily on the PRBB premises."*

There is no need to elaborate extensively on the quality of the food, pastries and sandwiches, as the survey will speak for itself. As everything is prepared early in the morning for the rest of the day, many products remain on display throughout the day and are even served on subsequent days.

Once again, the lack of kitchen staff has a significant impact on the quality of the service. Not only are products from previous days served, but the quality of the products themselves is also noticeably different from what is available in the surrounding cafeterias. The portion sizes are also lacking, with situations such as larger portions of side dishes being served compared to the main dish being relatively common.

- *"Satisfaction surveys: understanding the level of quality perceived by users is the basis for establishing a continuous improvement process to analyse weaknesses and initiate the necessary review measures."*

The survey will provide an indication of users' overall satisfaction with the service. What is clear, however, is that there are ongoing concerns among consumers regarding the quality, pricing and lack of staff.

We find it concerning that some consumers have to leave the PRBB premises to find better and more affordable food, despite Eurest being able to use the LabCafé facilities without paying rent.

These facilities are ultimately supported through public funding from our respective institutions.

We also believe that some of the measures currently in place may prioritise cost efficiency and profit margins over the quality and accessibility of the service. For comparison, prices at nearby establishments are generally around €5–8 for a complete meal including two courses, a drink, bread and dessert.

We believe it is important to recognise this situation and call for an immediate improvement in the quality and conditions of the service.

Complete the satisfaction survey:

<https://forms.gle/2tepGxKssNpeBqir6>

Sign requesting changes:

<https://forms.gle/QirDqUCx8eSXY2kA9>

Thank you.