

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION
International Cooperation and
Development DEVCO
Mr. Koen DOENS
Director General
1049 Brussels**

Brussels, July 23rd 2020

Subject: Enhancing resilience of procurement and contract implementation

Dear Mr. Doens,

Following critical months originated by the coronavirus (COVID-19) we are now progressing in lifting the lock-down of many countries in Europe. Slowly, other regions in the World are opening their frontiers, but the impact of the pandemic in lower and middle-income countries is worsened by financial limitations, losses of income and supply shortages that are pushing them into the highest levels of poverty in decades.

This unprecedented crisis is leaving important lessons learnt, including the need to boost economic development using digital means. Going digital also means being more environmental-friendly and increasing resilience for future pandemics and natural disasters. In this context, we strongly encourage DG DEVCO to continue its digitalisation efforts after the COVID-19 crisis, and not only in the procurement process, but also in contract implementation.

The acceptance of electronic documents for expression of interest and tenders, the exchange of scanned copies of contracts in pdf format, and the acceptance of invoices and accompanying reports and supporting documents by e-mail, should not be exceptional measures, but remain valid after international transport and mobility is fully restored.

Similarly, contract implementation should be increasingly digitalised, avoiding unnecessary travel and using ICT solutions and platforms to hold meetings whenever possible, communicate with stakeholders and carry out technical assistance, capacity building and training activities.

Home-based work should be encouraged to a larger extent, along with new project management approaches from Consultants and new supporting tools for time-based contracts.

We are aware of the difficulties in some countries to manage contracts using digital means, and specific budget lines could be included in contracts to cover internet access through digital cards or vouchers for internet centers, in the form of a *digital per diem* or *digital allowance*. All these measures would have to be clearly reflected in the Terms of Reference and duly justified, to ensure transparency and accountability.

These are pressing issues for the Consulting and Engineering industry as well as for EU partner countries, and we need to work together on creating a digital environment that is effective, efficient and facilitates the measure of performance and results. With this letter we would like to confirm that our industry is fully ready to undertake this important digital transformation.


We look forward to strengthening our collaboration with DG DEVCO in the digitalisation process and we would be honoured to exchange on this subject with your concerned teams thru a virtual meeting.

In closing words, it is important to remember that the exceptionally pressing situation the world is going through must not lead institutions to overlook the main principles governing EU-procurement: a wider uptake of innovative green and social procurement, increased access to markets, transparency and fair competition.

With our kindest regards



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*The **European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations (EFCA)** has member associations in 29 countries, and is the sole European Federation representing the engineering and related services industry. EFCA also represents FIDIC (The International Federation of Consulting Engineers) in Europe. The EFCA's European External Aid Committee monitors developments within the European institutions involved in external aid such as the EC, EIB, KfW, AfD, and the EBRD.*

*The **European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations (FEACO)** has the purpose to assist in the promotion and development of the profession of Management Consultancy in Europe. The FEACO Procurement Committee (FPC) has been running for more than 15 years and is dedicated to follow all activities that the International Financing Institutions (IFI's) drive around Development Aid financing, policies and more particularly their related procurement procedures.*