

Position paper on the use of Country Systems

EFCA favours the use of International procedures in the procurement of consulting engineering services in European external aid

In the context of establishing common rules and procedures in the Union's instruments for external actions, it is of utmost importance to preserve the highest international standards of fairness, openness, transparency and competition in the procurement of service contracts.

At present, most country systems do not offer the same guarantees as International or European procurement procedures and further efforts should be made on raising the country's standards, not on using country systems just because they are local.

EFCA supports the Agenda for Change

EFCA supports the European Commission's Agenda for Change to strengthen partner countries' ownership of development policies and reforms, and it shares the goal of boosting the private sector in these countries. We believe that the best way of doing so is by using International Best Practice in procurement, in order to raise the partner countries' own standards and to promote knowledge sharing between foreign and local enterprises.

Quality has to be key

International best practice offers the appropriate information, procurement and contracting procedures that guarantee the best value for money for contracting authorities and attract the best service providers to the market. The key elements of best practice in knowledge-based service contracts procurement are:

- **Publishing procurement plans and contract forecasts** that allow companies to follow-up and to prepare for the tenders;
- Using **restricted procedures** that allow companies to concentrate efforts in preparing specific proposals. Shortlists also provide very valuable information on the competition;
- **Publishing systematically shortlists and awards**, that allow companies to build up the necessary market intelligence;
- **Using Quality-Based Selection (QBS) or Quality-Cost-Based Selection (QCBS)** with at least an 80-20 ratio and a double envelope system, awarding an appropriate weight to quality. Knowledge-based services should never be tendered on price;
- **Avoiding direct or indirect restrictions on the tenderers' nationality** (e.g. obligation to be registered in the country, hold national permits/certifications, experts with national diplomas/charters, etc);
- **Avoiding excessive administrative burden** on companies, such as notarising and legalising a large amount of documents in a short period of time.

Quality of European Aid

European external aid should promote the use of International Best Practice in procurement (PRAG or similar) and encourage knowledge and experience sharing between European and local enterprises (mostly SMEs). Both of these aspects are essential to ensure quality and a sustainable development in partner countries.