



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Director-General

Brussels
DEVCO.R.3(2020)4634488

Subject: Procurement and contract implementation

Dear Ms Ferguson and Mr Wynrock,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 23 July 2020, which highlights the difficulties faced today by economic operators, particularly those in EU's partner countries.

In order to address some of the negative effects of the current crisis, your federations formulate proposals to continue their consultancy activities by making greater use of the digitalised management of calls for tenders and contracts.

The main ideas behind the digitalisation is indeed to enhance efficiency and increase quality. Furthermore, the digitalisation of the contracting procedures has also an impact on the environment as it reduces the carbon footprint and the use of paper.

I fully share these goals and this is precisely the purpose of the new system for a more efficient, transparent and results-oriented planning, management and follow-up of EU external actions (OPSYS) that we are currently developing.

We have already started the deployment of OPSYS; for example, the management of specific contract procedures under framework contracts have already been fully digitalised and are now available in production.

We expect by the beginning of next year to be able to manage all the other contracting procedures in this new system, with features such as the ability to work remotely, the automatic generation of key documents (financial offers, contracts, amendments, etc.), electronic signature, and the electronic submission of deliverables and invoices. We also anticipate enhanced communication between economic operators and contracting authorities.

Ms Ines Ferguson, Chair, European External Aid Committee, EFCA
Mr Didier Wynrock, Head, FEACO Procurement Committee, FEACO
Avenue des Arts, 3-5
1210 Brussels
Belgium

In my reply to your letter dated 30 March 2020, I highlighted the exceptional measures that we have put in place in the days following confinement because of COVID-19. In this regard, I can inform you that these measures allowed the uninterrupted conclusion of contracts and processing of payments, which were not affected by the change in working conditions.

While such measures are conceived as an exceptional measure and, in principle, are limited to the duration of the current situation, given the global evolution of the pandemic and the uncertainty this poses for the global economy, we are in discussion with the central services within the Commission with a view to maintaining the current measures, as a bridging solution, until the full deployment of the OPSYS system.

Finally, I appreciate your practical proposals for the remote implementation of technical assistance, capacity-building and training tasks, and the introduction of a digital *per diem* in contracts; we will be glad to further analyse them having in mind operational considerations.

I would like to thank you once again for your initiatives and the excellent cooperation that your federations have with my services. We intend to consult you when developing new working methods in line with your expectations.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]
Koen DOENS

c.c.: L. Bagur (DEVCO), Ch. Danielsson, M. Johnston, Ch. Komninos (NEAR), H. Hardeman, R. Mac Aongusa (FPI)