


EDITORIAL

GFA Consulting Group has been implementing EU Framework Contracts (FWC) for more than 15 years. Originally, Medica, the company's health department, and the regional departments were involved in different consortia implementing contracts. This was to build up knowledge for long-term projects, offer short-term missions to GFA experts and obtain more background information on projects implemented by the consortium. At that time, participating in project preparatory missions led to the contractor's exclusion from the implementation of the respective technical assistance contract.

GFA led its first EU FWC consortium from 2015 to 2019, the Beneficiary Third Countries of the EU External Aid (Benef) Lot 9 on Education, continuously improving performance over the four-year period. When the contract volume ceiling was increased to up to 1 million Euros in the subsequent round, the GFA management decided to extend its FWC business. GFA successfully applied for and won four EU International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) contracts under the Services for the Implementation of External Aid FWC (SIEA 2018), two in the lead and two as partners. As the FWCs have a business model with much tighter deadlines than other projects, GFA established a FWC Unit in June 2018.

There is fierce competition for FWCs. Many specialized European firms have been implementing FWCs for years. The GFA FWC Unit exceeded its initial goals after just 18 months and applied successfully for two more FWCs funded by DFID and SDC.



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FRAMEWORK CONTRACTS ARE IN VOGUE

Framework Contracts are the means of choice for many contracting agencies in order to reduce time-consuming and bureaucratic procurement processes. One full set of tender documents is initially submitted and a specific number of consortia that meet the minimum requirements is then shortlisted for 2 to 4 years. Subsequently, hundreds of specific contracts are tendered to the shortlisted consortia only. The entire procurement process lasts only 6 to 10 weeks from the date of tender publication to the start of the expert mission.

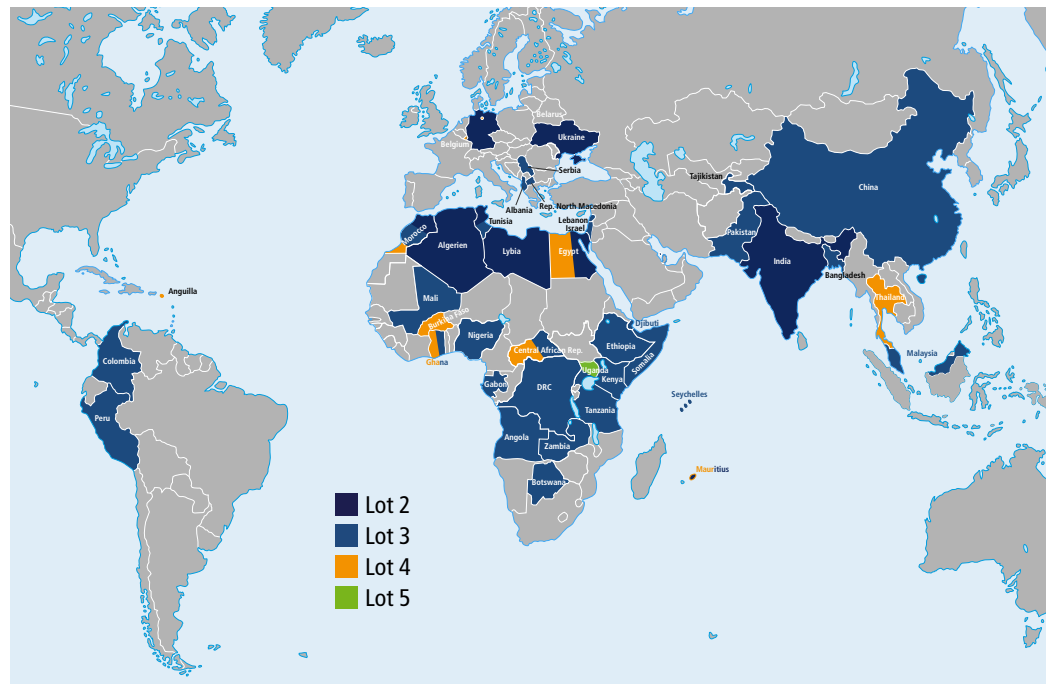
A request for service is sent to three or four consortia at the same time, with each consortium comprising 6 to 10 partners. In the first few hours, potentially 40 consulting firms start searching for the few key expert profiles as described in the terms of reference. The EU publishes a hit list of successful companies every twelve months. GFA is the fourth best performer in relation to the volume of contracts acquired within two GFA-led lots.

As the FWC business model is different, so is the FWC Unit's approach. The Unit has innovated, for example, introducing the full integration of recruitment specialists into the Unit and establishing a new cooperation model with the

technical departments. In addition, a new quality management standard is being defined in order to adjust procedures that meet specific business requirements.

Within GFA, the FWC Unit is pioneering the use of the new EU change and project management system OPSYS. Its introduction aims at increased effectiveness and productivity, improved transparency and collaboration and, last but not least, better knowledge management. All documents will be on one platform, from ToR and final reports to administrative orders, approval letters and performance assessments. OPSYS is a communication platform that allows comments and updated timelines. The entire contract management is digitalized. Contracts are signed electronically and, once countersigned; the system initiates the advance payment immediately. The transparency of the system will show the performance of consortia and task managers alike. All documents will be available to all authorized EU personnel worldwide.

In the long run, all EU technical assistance contracts will be managed by means of OPSYS. The FWC Unit of GFA will be able to share its experiences with the system and be available for ad-hoc support to all technical departments.



FWC UNIT PORTFOLIO

The Unit was established to implement the EU SIEA FWC. In addition, the team has successfully applied for two more FWCs in the last 18 months. In the following section, these three contracts are presented in more detail.

DFID INTERNATIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PROGRAM FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) established this Framework Agreement with a range of suppliers to access advice and expertise in a cost efficient and effective manner across eleven thematic areas. In response to the dynamic and challenging needs of working in complex and fragile contexts, the suppliers provide multi-disciplinary teams to design, manage and deliver international development program services with agility and innovation while maintaining fair competition. The Framework Agreement started in July 2019 for a period of 24 months with a possible extension of another year. GFA is a sub-contractor for one of the 15 British suppliers in four high-value lots, with specific contract values between 3 to 12 million Pounds. GFA receives so-called call downs related to conflict & governance, education, human development & health, and livelihoods and keeps in close contact with the technical departments. The internal and external competition for DFID funding is much higher than in other tenders. Some of

the consortia in which GFA is involved, have up to 32 partners.

BACKSTOPPING MANDATE FOR THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)

Through this contract, GFA expects to gain valuable insight into SDC programming and implementation in inclusive economic development. In-house staff from the Financial Systems Development (FSD) Department will provide technical expertise to staff members of SDC in Basel and its country offices over a two-year period. They will provide strategic and technical support such as credits and savings for specific beneficiaries, digital delivery of financial services, impact measurement, business planning, investment calculations, key developments and innovations in FSD as well as financial services for rural beneficiaries, gender, digital delivery of financial services, or social performance measurement.

EU SERVICES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXTERNAL AID 2018 FWC

The SIEA 2018 FWC was a game changer in EU-funded technical assistance. In the past, EU FWCs were limited to assignments of up to 300,000 Euros. Then, the maximum amount for a specific contract under SIEA was increased to 999,999 Euros. A wide range of services are provided under this contract, including analytical studies, elaboration of ToR and action documents, mid-term and final evaluations as well as technical assistance. The contract lasts for two years with a possible extension of another 24 months. The

GFA INVOLVEMENT IN SIEA

LOT 2: INFRASTRUCTURE, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND JOBS, INCLUDING TRADE

Indicative budget: € 155 million

Role of GFA: Consortium partner

LOT 3: HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND PEACE

Indicative budget: € 154 million

Role of GFA: Consortium lead

LOT 4: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (EDUCATION, HEALTH) AND SAFETY NET (SOCIAL PROTECTION)

Indicative budget: € 73 million

Role of GFA: Consortium lead

LOT 5: PFM AND BUDGET SUPPORT

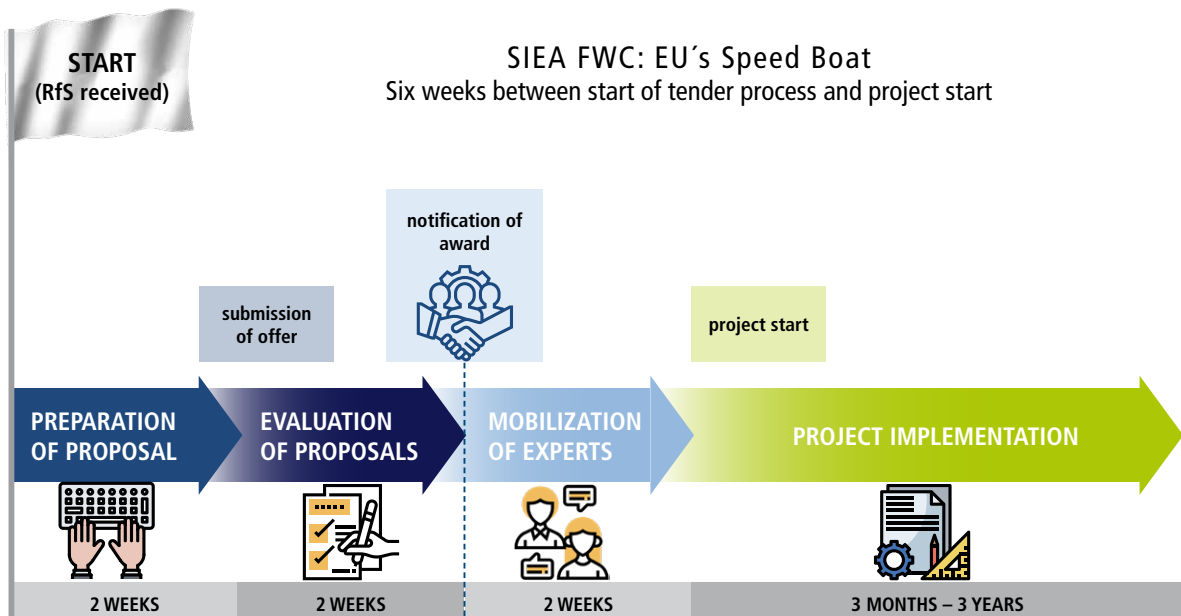
Indicative budget: € 63 million

Role of GFA: Consortium partner

Total budget: € 445 million

beneficiary of a contract can be the European Commission headquarters, one or more EU delegations and/or legal entities such as ministries in partner countries. GFA is involved in four out of six lots (see box above). In each lot, up to ten consortia are shortlisted and three or four consortia are invited to submit offers for specific requests.

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INTERVIEW

Project manager Juliette Berdaguer (JB) and team leader Getachew Mengistie Alemu (GA) were interviewed on the Implementation of the Intellectual Property Development Plan project in Mauritius.

Can you please describe the procurement process of this particular contract?

JB: As with each Request for Service within the context of the EU Framework Contracts, the procurement process is particularly short and competitive. This is why we had to react quickly and identify the best experts immediately. As soon as we received the offer, we sought to understand the structure and challenges of this project in order to propose a top level and complementary team of experts capable of meeting the requirements of the ToR. In this specific case, the project has a duration of two years and is composed of several key objectives, to be implemented by a team of four experts, in order to support the implementation of the main recommendations of the Intellectual Property Development Plan (IPDP) in Mauritius. This Request for Service was a good example of successful teamwork within the Framework Contracts Unit as many of us participated in identifying the right experts. We identified three of the four experts on day one and had the complete team within a few days.

What is this project about and what are the main objectives?

JB: The major objectives of the project are to support the implementation of the main IPDP recommendations and facilitate the use of intellectual property (IP) to meet development goals and ensure policy coherence.

GA: To realize these objectives, the project identified major areas of activities. For example, drafting regulations for the implementation of the comprehensive IP Act enacted in July 2019, establishing an IP Council and setting up of a coordination mechanism with agencies that are entrusted with enforcement of intellectual property rights, restructuring the industrial property office, defining the human resource profile of the office staff, and setting up registries for each of the elements of intellectual property protected under the 2019 IP Act. We are also expected to

develop instruments of accession to the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Madrid Protocol Concerning International Registration of Trademarks, and the Hague Agreement Concerning International Registration of Industrial Designs, identified needs and requirements of higher learning and research and development institutions, and finally designed and implemented target-oriented capacity building programs.

Why does the EU support the government of Mauritius in implementing its IP development plan?

GA: The European Union is the major trading partner of Mauritius. The country is signatory to the interim EU Economic Partnership of Agreement, which aims at fostering trade with beneficiary countries. International trade involves IP issues. As a result, one of the areas that would be negotiated under the EPA is IP. Strengthening the IP of Mauritius will therefore support the economic partnership between the EU and Mauritius.

What is the importance of this project for Mauritius and the region?

GA: IP is widely recognized as an instrument for promoting socio-economic development. It serves as an effective policy tool in unlocking local creative, inventive and innovative potential, and stimulating the transfer and use of foreign technologies and creative works. It encourages fair competition and, thereby, promotes the creation of wealth and fostering national social, cultural and economic development. I believe that when the project is completed, Mauritius will not only be in a better position in the use of IP as a tool for development but also lead and support similar initiatives in the

region such as sub-regional and regional trading blocs where IP issues would be discussed and trade agreements negotiated.

Do you consider IP in Africa as a driver for economic development?

GA: IP rights protection played a big role in the economic development of the developed and newly industrialized countries. I strongly believe that IP can support the socio-economic development endeavours of African countries and institutions as well as linking national with international IP systems. In Africa, there is a growing recognition of the role of IP in addressing human necessities, improving competitiveness, integrating a global knowledge economy, fostering socio-economic development and improving people's living standards. This is reflected in various measures adopted by African governments. The majority of African countries have national IP laws and institutions. A number of countries belong to regional and international IP agreements. Various countries have adopted national IP policies and strategies or national IP development plans to guide and ensure the effective use of IP as a tool for development. These measures resulted in increased use of the IP system in particular trademarks by nationals and residents. To promote the use of patents in further strengthening the generation, protection and commercialization of research results made by public research and development institutions and universities, a number of institutions have adopted institutional IP policies and strategies, and set up technology transfer offices.

From left to right:
Trade Counsellor of the EU Delegation, Anna Brzozowska; GFA project manager, Juliette Berdaguer; Ambassador of the EU Delegation, H.E. Vincent Degert; GFA project team leader, Getachew Mengistie Alemu



PROJECTS IN BRIEF

GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA IN ALBANIA IN THE PROCESS OF ACCESSION TO EU

This project is in line with the 2016 to 2020 EU Gender Action Plan. The activities evolve around three main intervention areas, i.e. gender equality policies & programming, gender equality capacity building & institutional strengthening, and gender equality local pilot projects. The overall objective is to support the Gender Equality Agenda by enhancing institutional support at the central and local level, and promoting a joint platform to boost action on gender equality priorities. The specific objectives are to undertake a



Country Gender Analysis in relevant areas and sectors as a tool to further inform government policy making and mainstreaming. In the course of this project a networking and exchange platform to promote capacity development and evidence based policy making and implementation has been established. Additionally, linkages between local and national level policies, EU Charter for Equality and local driven initiatives between government, civil society, academia and local level actors have been promoted. Finally, the networking and the promotion of exchange between members of parliament with EU networks, EU member states and parliaments in the EU accession process, as well as exchange between gender equality mechanisms and civil society organizations in the region have been supported.

STUDY ON A TRIANGULAR APPROACH TO ENHANCE THE AFRICA-EU ALLIANCE PERSPECTIVES

The overall objective of this contract is to help the European Commission identify the priorities of North-African countries in their aligned economic interest and integration with Sub-Saharan Africa at regional and continental level. In addition, ways in which to adapt strategies, approaches and financial cooperation to factor in the challenge of the Africa-EU Alliance are identified. The specific objective is to make specific proposals for dialogue and financial cooperation with North African countries; consistent with the EU Neighbourhood Policy and in line with the objectives set out in the Africa-EU Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs so that an approach for a triangular cooperation between Europe, North Africa, and Sub-Sahara African countries can be set up.

IDENTIFICATION AND FORMULATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH

The global objective of this identification and formulation mission has been to develop a comprehensive program that creates a protective and inclusive environment, in which children and adolescents can fully enjoy their rights and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. The program addresses areas such as primary school enrolment, gender parity in primary and secondary education, the reduction of child mortality and improved immunization coverage. During the mission the team of experts has developed an Action Document plus annexes, including logical framework and budget, for the proposed EU support.

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY FOR THE GHANA EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAM

The objective of this contract is to support the European Union Delegation to Ghana in the implementation of the GESP by developing and implementing a strategy for communication and visibility and to reinforce the communication coordination among different GESP components. This includes careful stocktaking of activities undertaken in social protection, employment and decent work, skills development, business development and investment promotion. Horizontal communication and enhanced synergies between different GESP components are supported by communication activities and public awareness campaigns. The public debate on GESP topics and highlighting program achievements in terms of gender equality, persons with disability and youth as crosscutting issues of the program are reinforced.

IMPRINT

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GFA Consulting Group is a growing consulting organization active in international economic development. The main sectors of the company comprise agriculture & rural development, natural resources management & environment, climate change, energy, governance, public finance management, private sector development, education, skills & employment, financial systems development, health, monitoring & evaluation, water, sanitation & waste management, digital innovation and framework contracts. Every year, GFA carries out around 300 projects and studies around the world.

GFA vision – to be the partner of choice for clients in our core service areas.

GFA mission – to improve the livelihood of beneficiaries through our professional services.

GFA core values – to offer high performance in service delivery, technical excellence in our main sectors, innovative approaches and products, and credibility with our clients when putting projects into practice.