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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX II

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of
Nicaragua for 2022

Action Document for Support measures – Cooperation facility

ANNUAL PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans of Article 23 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Support measures – Cooperation facility Nicaragua 2021-24 OPSYS number: ACT-61479 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting (inter alia) TEI.
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Nicaragua
4. Programming document	Nicaragua Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 ¹
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Support Measures
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Not applicable
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): 17 (partnerships for the goals) Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: 1 (sustainable development: no poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions)
8 a) DAC code(s)	43010 – Multi-sector 100%
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	6000 – Private sector institution

¹ C(2021)9160, 15.12.2021

9. Involvement of multilateral partners	Not foreseen			
10. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
11. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective
Digitalisation @ digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity @ transport people2people energy digital connectivity		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
13. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020140 Total estimated cost: EUR 4 000 000.00 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 4 000 000.00			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
14. Type of financing	Direct management through: - Procurement			
15. Type of measure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of Civil Society			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The proposed action will provide the EU delegation with the necessary tools and instruments to ensure high standard and quality results in the implementation of its cooperation and communication strategies in Nicaragua. Building on lessons learned from previous cooperation facility interventions, which have been instrumental in providing technical support and capacity across the project management cycle, creating spaces for policy dialogue with different stakeholders and promoting EU messages and visibility in the country, the action clearly falls under the MIP priority 'Support Measures'.

The action responds to the need to ensure a rigorous identification, formulation and implementation of actions under the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027, as well as to support implementation of cross cutting priorities and other strategies, such as the Human Rights and Democracy strategy, the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) of the Gender Action Plan (GAP), Youth Action Plan (EU Youth Platform) and, the EU Cultural Diplomacy Strategy for international relations. The Cooperation Facility will also be used to carry out thematic studies and impact assessments, to provide support and create spaces for policy dialogue when appropriate, to provide short-term technical assistance and to support aid efficiency initiatives such as donor coordination. It will also provide a dedicated platform for exchange and information with Nicaraguan youth, connecting with the global youth sounding board.

The action also includes an instrument earmarked to support the review, updating and implementation of the communication and public diplomacy strategy in a highly complex political context. In so doing, the action will contribute to improving public awareness, understanding and perception of the Global Gateway, the EU and its role in the country, particularly in certain priority areas. Strategic communication activities will be earmarked to promote universal values, such as human rights and gender equality, and interests shared by the EU and enhanced visibility and a better understanding of the EU as a relevant global power (and partner). It will also help coordinate effectively with EUMS and, where necessary, with other multilateral and international actors in the achievement of these objectives. In addition, public diplomacy initiatives will aim at reinforcing and developing trusted channels of engagement, fostering networks, and involving key target audiences and partners such as women, youth, alumni of EU programmes, academia, influencers, social media, business, civil society, indigenous and afro descendent people, persons with disabilities and the cultural sector.

As individual programmes will no longer have dedicated visibility actions, there will be a coordinated approach for the promotion of targeted messaging and communication focusing on impact and beneficiaries (rights-holders) of our development cooperation, working across programmes and in close collaboration with implementing partners.

The action's main goal is to contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of EU cooperation and communication activities, ensuring that the MIP priority areas reach maximum results, impact and visibility. It will contribute to SDG 1 (sustainable development: no poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships to achieve the Goal).

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

Nicaragua has evolved into a full-blown family dictatorship which by now can be safely described as totalitarian. Systematic corruption, including through the plundering of Nicaragua's natural resources at the expense of climate change action, and nepotism contribute to a deep crisis of governance. The security forces and the judiciary have been totally co-opted for repression of dissent and in complete disrespect of the human rights standards Nicaragua has committed to historically. The government rejects any international accountability, including to regional bodies and has requested exit from the OAS (and with it the inter-American HR system²) in 2021 becoming effective in 2023. Meanwhile, the OAS office in Managua has been taken over by the Government.

In the absence of separation of powers, the repression of political opponents, activists, journalists, and civil society, including women's organisations, continues to gain pace. The regime currently holds an estimated 180 political prisoners while over 40 of these have been sentenced without due process to harsh prison sentences. The judiciary does not comply with international nor national legislation and failed to implement reforms, such as suggested by the Inter-American Court of HR.

By May 2022, more than 200 civil society and non-governmental organisations have been closed depriving large parts of the impoverished population of access to vital services. Through the nationalisation of six private universities the regime seeks to put in check discontent among students, key protagonists of the 2018 protest movement. Regime repression, including imposition of Kafkaesque administrative requirements, have led to closures and departures of many trusted partners.

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in November 2021 without opposition and under a partisan electoral administration that was responsible to manipulate all aspects of the process. The European Union (EU) and likeminded members of the international community have stated that the elections have taken place without democratic guarantees while their results lack legitimacy. Municipal elections are scheduled to take place in 2022 and (absent reforms long called for, including by an EU EOM) will be similarly compromised.

The protests of April 2018 and the Government's heavy-handed response triggered a violent socio-political that also translated into an economic crisis. The economy has contracted 8.8 percentage points between 2017 and 2020, while there was a shy recovery in 2021, with a reported 6.5%³ growth, but still short of pre-crisis levels. Nicaragua's poverty rate is projected to reach 21.2 percent in 2025, equivalent to 1.5 million Nicaraguans living in poverty⁴. Macro-economic management continues to be solid in Nicaragua and with enough fiscal space but public infrastructure and financing of the security forces consume most of the surplus. Nicaragua bets on Chinese credits and assistance as it switched diplomatic relations from Taiwan to the PRC only in December 2021. Inflation has been rising and the Russian war against Ukraine will leave its mark on Nicaragua's economy, too, as energy and fertiliser prices are on the rise, while some export commodities have seen rising values.

² IACHR provides a comprehensive overview in its October 2021 report on the Concentration of Power and the Weakening of the Rule of Law in Nicaragua (https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/284.asp)

³ Banco Central de Nicaragua [BCN], 2021.

⁴ FUNIDES, 2022

The EU and all active Member States have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to a democratic, peaceful and negotiated solution to a socio-political crisis - whose existence the Government denies. This includes continuation of support to the population also by helping to strengthen the rule of law and promoting economic and social development for those in more vulnerable situations. At all times this needs to be done avoiding the politicisation of development assistance and humanitarian aid.

This proposed action will be fundamental in supporting the implementation of EU strategies in a challenging environment: increased political tension and sanctions against the regime from EU and likeminded countries, closing of civil society and cooperation spaces, added to the cancellation or withdrawal of implementing partners, and interlinks with the very few remaining MS.

This Action is aligned with the Global Gateway Strategy, the European Consensus for Development, the Gender Action Plan III, and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically with the priorities of eradication of poverty as well as the digitalization as a cross-cutting issue, the promotion of democracy, good governance, gender equality and respect for human rights and for the rule of law. The action will contribute to SDG 1 (sustainable development: no poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships to achieve the Goal).

2.2 Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis:

Technical expertise and human resources availability within the delegation does not cover all required sectors to ensure analysis, identification, formulation and evaluation of interventions in the implementation of our cooperation strategies. The capacity to hire ad hoc targeted expertise, including gender and human rights expertise, is therefore necessary to ensure high technical and professional standards in all our deliverables.

Both the MIP and the communication strategy identify youth as one of the EU's priority target groups, particularly those in a situation of greatest vulnerability, including as rural youth, indigenous afro-descendants people, persons with disabilities, women and adolescents. These challenges are often exacerbated for young women and girls, as well as for youth with disabilities and all discriminated groups, such as LGBTI youth. In this sense, young women face further predicaments, relating to their sexual and reproductive rights and exposure to physical, psychological and sexual violence. Safe spaces for dialogue between the EU/MS and the youth, providing exposure to universal values shared by the EU and incentives for engaging in and contributing to civic life are missing in this complex environment.

Strategic communication and public diplomacy have proven key to promote EU values and interests and promote enhanced visibility and a better understanding of the EU as a relevant global power in Nicaragua. Since the socio-political crisis of 2018 and the continuous deterioration of the situation since, the EU has revised its communications strategy to pro-actively promote EU principles and values (through different initiatives and channels) and inform about EU's cooperation impact in the country. Individual programme visibility has been almost non-existent during this period to avoid political manipulation of the information and avoid it being represented as supporting the government, and hence giving it a legitimacy it does not hold, rather than the people. Keeping regular dialogue with implementing partners and analysts has been fundamental in ensuring aligned messages, as has been a very close coordination with MS and likeminded partners to increase the visibility of the EU and the impact of our initiatives. As the delegation proactively manages communication and public diplomacy, including programme visibility, technical support services are required to ensure professional and efficient delivery.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:

Activities under this action will support the delegation and MS directly, as possibly other likeminded organisations for joint analysis and events. It will also support private sector and civil society, including women's organisations and organisations representing specific groups, as appropriate for the implementation of activities. Considering the current political context, no support will be provided to government institutions or local authorities, although some coordination will be required in specific instances. Key target stakeholders for this action include:

Nicaraguan youth will be the main stakeholder in the youth platform. Young women and men and adolescents are the age groups that report the lowest percentages of community and political participation in the country, however, they are active in the new forms of digital participation, especially through social networks. Youth report less involvement in activities such as volunteering and feel more excluded from politics than adults, however, they are the group that shows the greatest optimism about their ability to influence the development of the country through volunteering and those who reflect a greater interest in political matters. Due to the socio-political situation in the country, the majority of young people and adolescents aspire to immigrate to other countries due to the lack of job opportunities. The high levels of migration of young people since 2018, related to security and political instability, have translated into a situation where activism takes place mostly outside the country. Youth of all origins, ethnic backgrounds, orientations and education levels will be targeted by the platform, with a particular focus on girls and young women.

As women are a key partner and target for the EU action in Nicaragua, both women and CSOs focused on gender are considered important stakeholders, too. This is a particularly delicate field to work in given official propaganda about female political participation when in reality life of ordinary women is marked by repression of social and economic rights. Sexual violence figures are overwhelming (one in four women have been ever raped in her life, 69% of sexual violence acts are committed against girls and adolescents -under 18). The main cause of death among adolescent women is pregnancy/birth complications. Salary gaps and job access barriers undermine women development. Gender roles and stereotypes also restrict the potential of education for individual development. The conclusions of the Country Gender Profile, the GAP's Country Level Implementation Plan and the institutional gender analysis in the Delegation have been taken into account to design this action. As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that gender equality is a significant objective. Attention to girls and women, as well as women's rights organisation is central to all activities in this action.

In addition, the action will support work with relevant stakeholders in the two priority areas identified in the MIP (green recovery and productive sectors), as well as in all mainstreamed areas, including gender, youth, indigenous and afro descendant groups as key target groups as well as digitalisation and human development as strategic vehicles for implementation.

Specific stakeholders are identified by the strategic communication and public diplomacy plan, including:

- Private sector with research and/or innovation programs;
- Diplomatic community and international organisations, NGOs and CSOs (both national and international), business community and academia;
- Relevant regional and local actors will be identified to increase our reach in more distant regions such as the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS) and the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN);
- A wide universe of target actors include journalists, editors and bloggers, opinion leaders, pro-democratic civil society groups and leaders both in the country and in exile (diaspora), young people, students and academics, business community, cultural sector, women, indigenous people and afro descendant groups, people with disabilities and beneficiaries of EU development cooperation – who are often the preferred voices to testify about the impact of cooperation in communication activities.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of the EU's cooperation and communication strategies.

The Specific(s) Objective(s) (Outcomes) of this action are to

1. To ensure gender sensitive, professional and technical quality in analysis, preparation/formulation, implementation and management of the EU-Nicaragua cooperation;
2. To ensure EU's interventions and policies in Nicaragua respond to youth priorities, perspectives and needs;
3. To increase public knowledge and understanding of the EU and its role and activities in Nicaragua and support to universal values shared by the EU.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

Outcome 1 (specific objective): ***To ensure gender sensitive, professional and technical quality in analysis, preparation/formulation, implementation and management of the EU-Nicaragua cooperation***

- 1.1 Improved capacities for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the EU cooperation, through the provision of technical assistance, particularly on gender and conflict sensitive programming;
- 1.2 Facilitation of Team Europe coordination and joint efforts at the country level
- 1.3 A structured and coordinated technical assistance instrument to meet the demands to support civil society, particularly organisations representing groups in more vulnerable situations;
- 1.4 Supported policy and sector dialogues as appropriate and required.

Outcome 2 (specific objective): ***To ensure EU's interventions and policies in Nicaragua respond to youth priorities, perspectives and needs***

- 2.1 Established an inclusive youth platform for ongoing dialogue between the EU Delegation and youth, for meaningful involvement of young people in the EU external and cooperation action.
- 2.2 Provided a space for reflection and generation of knowledge for young people and for improving and showcasing the impact of the actions of the EU and Member States in Nicaragua.
- 2.3 Monitored EU's programmes impact on youth.
- 2.4 Linked up with the global EU Youth Sounding Board for consultations in the design of EU and State Members actions and initiatives in the country and to exchange information and share ideas, among others.

Outcome 3 (Specific objective): ***To increase public knowledge and understanding of the EU and its role and activities in Nicaragua and support to universal values shared by the EU***

- 3.1 Updated the strategic communication and public diplomacy plan.
- 3.2 Reinforced the EU's brand positioning making it more understandable, visible and influential to target audiences.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Outcome 1 (specific objective): ***To ensure gender sensitive, professional and technical quality in analysis, preparation/formulation, implementation and management of the EU-Nicaragua cooperation***

Activities related to Output 1.1: Improved capacities for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the EU cooperation, through the provision of technical assistance, particularly on gender and conflict sensitive programming:

- Provision of long-term and short-term technical assistance (TA), specific studies, activities of dissemination, peer-to-peer training to support the drafting of documents to be formulated in the framework of MIP 2021-2027, including with a human rights based approach;

- Long-term gender technical assistance to assist the gender mainstreaming in the different projects and to support the work of the Delegation Gender Focal Person;
- Long-term gender technical assistance to assist on climate change and indigenous and afro-descendent related issues to support the work of the Delegation Focal Person;
- Technical assistance in the identification and formulation of new projects / programmes (specialized inputs and pre-feasibility studies), evaluation of programmes, learning processes etc.

Activities related to Output 1.2: Facilitation of Team Europe coordination and joint efforts at the country level

- Support Team Europe (and other likeminded actors as appropriate) coordination and joint activities, such as technical discussions on policy issues, joint performance assessments and crosscutting topics fostering harmonization of aid. This includes logistics and operational costs for meetings, forums, trainings, field missions, studies, assessments, etc.
- Trainings and specific studies to facilitate Team Europe coordination at country level.

Activities related to Output 1.3: A structured and coordinated technical assistance instrument to meet the demands to support civil society, particularly organisations representing groups in more vulnerable situations:

- Organise dialogue and consultation with indigenous and afro-descendent peoples (especially women, youth, persons with disabilities etc.) to secure their full participation and their free, prior and informed consent in all EU's intervention and external action;
- Medium and short-term technical assistance, training, thematic studies and assessments of sector and crosscutting issues (such as human rights, gender, disability, youth, climate etc.);
- Studies, awareness-raising and trainings relating to gender equality and human rights as well as those elements that can contribute to improved transparency and accountability of EU Nicaragua's cooperation;
- Technical assistance on gender issues;
- Technical assistance on climate change and indigenous and afro-descendent related issues.

Activities related to Output 1.4: Supported policy and sector dialogues as appropriate and required

- Events, conferences, assessments, exchange platforms and any other administrative or technical assistance expenditure necessary for the programming and management of actions and to support sector dialogues and engagement with institutions and other stakeholders including external (international and local) experts;
- Research and innovation initiatives and studies on relevant issues and the dissemination thereof.

Outcome 2 (specific objective): ***To ensure EU's interventions and policies in Nicaragua respond to youth priorities, perspectives and needs***

Activities related to Output 2.1 Established an inclusive youth platform for ongoing dialogue between the EU Delegation and youth, for meaningful involvement of young people in the EU external and cooperation action.

- Establishing an inclusive platform for youth participation that contributes to improving the incidence of the actions and incorporate youth perspectives in the EU and member states actions and initiatives which in turn appropriately responds to the key challenges and opportunities of all youth in Nicaragua, including those most marginalised;
- Designing a virtual youth platform to promote transformative, meaningful participation and intercultural dialogue among youth and EU Delegation that takes into account contextual risks.

Activities related to Output 2.2 Provided a space for reflection and generation of knowledge for young people and for improving and showcasing the impact of the actions of the EU and Member States in Nicaragua.

- Expand engagement spaces to break hierarchies and provide inclusive forums to youth in exile;
- Promoting exchange of experiences at national, regional or international level with EU and Member States networks, among others.

Activities related to Output 2.3 Monitored EU's programmes impact on youth.

- Establishing the Youth Action Plan for the EUD to Nicaragua;
- Integrate a long term Youth technical assistance to support the work of the Delegation Youth focal point.

Activities related to Output 2.4 Linked up with the global EU Youth Sounding Board for consultations in the design of EU and State Members actions and initiatives in the country and to exchange information and share ideas, among others.

- Promoting alliances with youth and networks at regional level, headquarters, Member States and international organizations and leveraging existing initiatives (e.g. EU Alumni initiative);
- Strengthening youth's capacities and leadership emphasizing on intergenerational co-leadership to enable youth participation as the key-actors to provide effective, directed, well informed and participatory solutions in all EU action.

Outcome 3 (Specific objective): ***To increase public knowledge and understanding of the EU and its role and activities in Nicaragua and support to universal values shared by the EU***

Activities related to Output 3.1 Updated the strategic communication and public diplomacy plan.

- Develop the communication and public diplomacy strategy for the EU Delegation 2023-2027 including narrative, general messages, sector oriented messages, audiences and main activities, dissemination plan (including paid media strategy);
- Design and implementation of a mechanism for quantitative and qualitative monitoring of EU communication and its impact in the country, including a mid-term review of the strategy;
- Specialized technical support to and training of EU staff as relevant and appropriate;
- Partnerships with media (social media, independent television, radio and news outlets as well as international news agencies) for joint materials and activities;
- Organisation of recurrent events as identified by the strategy and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders;
- Communication, events and activities for the promotion of EU programmes and policies (for instance Erasmus+);
- Coordination of and technical support to partners' communication and visibility efforts.

Activities related to Output 3.2 Reinforced the EU's brand positioning more understandable, visible and influential to target audiences.

- Design and roll out at national level of (a) major public campaign(s) aimed at ordinary citizens, primarily in the 18-35 age cohort, with the objective of measurably increasing the awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's role and impact in the country. All such campaigns will be data-driven and based on clearly defined qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators;
- Design and implement political communication activities to support Summits, events and visits by College members, as relevant and necessary;
- Support the integration of relevant regional programmes into country-level strategic plans, particularly those that are flagship Global Gateway and/or Team Europe initiatives;
- Establish partnerships with relevant national / local influencers, champions, ambassadors etc which are designed to amplify the reach of content as well as connect with and engage the target audience(s). These may include local/national celebrities, champions, ambassadors etc;
- Undertake research required to ensure strategic communication activities are data-driven and measurable. This may include audience analysis and perception surveys, media landscape;
- Organise and implement public diplomacy activities (incl. sectoral diplomacies such as economic diplomacy, climate diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, science diplomacy) designed to contribute to building, strengthening and connecting networks and communities;
- Develop long-term initiatives to share EU values and create improved understanding about the EU and its partnership with Nicaragua and the wider region;
- Design, production and implementation of information and awareness campaigns: to increase awareness, understanding and perception of the EU as a relevant actor for Nicaraguans in the promotion of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development and to promote international values and principles.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Gender: Women and girls are key action stakeholders, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities, indigenous and afro-descendant women to ensure that they can overcome structural challenges and rise to their full potential. As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that gender equality is a significant objective. The conclusions of the Country Gender Profile, the GAP's Country Level Implementation Plan and the institutional gender analysis in the Delegation have been taken into account to design this action. Gender is mainstreamed in all components and activities and, additionally, the action presents a dedicated output to promote the quality of the gender mainstreaming in the rest of the actions in the Delegation. Sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators will be privileged. The action will contribute to the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III promoting more effective interventions implemented under the different thematic areas.

Civil society participation and the human rights based approach: the EU maintains its commitment to support civil society's work in the promotion and protection of human rights for all, democratic values and reconciliation. The contributions of all sectors of civil society organisations, whether formal or informal, and individuals, are fundamental to the development of the country against the increasingly repressive environment. This Action is aligned with the Global Gateway Strategy, the European Consensus for Development and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically with the priorities of eradication of poverty as well as the digitalization as a cross-cutting issue, the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and for the rule of law. The action will contribute to SDG 5 and 17. The action will be implemented with a human rights based approach and ensure its working principles will be taken into consideration at all stages and in all EUD interventions: applying all human rights for all, non-discrimination, meaningful and inclusive participation and fostering accountability and transparency. The action will also make sure that the EUD's interventions are more effective in leaving no one behind.

Conflict sensitivity: Strategy documents guiding EU action and interventions in Nicaragua, referred to above, have been informed by a conflict analysis screening undertaken jointly with MS in 2020-21, and updated in 2022. Its recommendations are incorporated into the design of the proposed action, particularly as it regards identification of partners, methodologies for working with the government and communication and visibility actions. The repression of civil society and dissent since 2018 and the continued socio political crisis with the increasingly hostile attitude by the government towards the EU and its policies has forced the EU to review and adapt its communication strategy. This includes a pro-active focus on impact and values away from collaboration with the government while protecting partners and beneficiaries working in a very risky environment. The youth platform is designed to provide a safe space in which risks for participation and politisation will be minimised through different strategies. Participants themselves will be selected in a conflict sensitive way that is respectful of origin, gender and affiliation amongst other criteria.

Vulnerable groups are explicitly integrated into the design of the action across objectives and will be some of the key stakeholders and beneficiaries:

In the case of indigenous and afro-descendant people, they are particularly disadvantaged given structural exclusion, poverty and exposure to natural hazards, among others. Therefore, the action will support the process of identification and design of actions indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants both directly and transversally, securing their free, prior and informed consent in all EU's intervention and external action.

Mainstreaming youth issues and their perspectives will be integrated in all areas of EU external action and Cooperation. The Youth platform will create a space for real and regular input by young people into the design of actions and decision making, it will support the capacity and relevant role of young people to provide input and voice their concerns and solutions consider them Youth Advisor for the EUD to Nicaragua. Youth inclusion, equality and non-discrimination will be pre-requisites to the Cooperation actions. The youth platform will have dedicated funding, clear objectives and monitoring mechanisms, gender-and-age specific data collection, governance structures to monitor implementation, regular, transparent and accessible communication, and spaces to more research in youth needs and priorities.

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment)

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that the action will be a structured and coordinated technical assistance instrument to meet the demands to support gender mainstreaming, data collection and analysis, conflict-sensitive sector analysis and impact assessment.

Human Rights

The action proposed is aligned with the Human Rights and democracy strategy for Nicaragua and integrates a human rights based approach throughout its components.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the action is considered relevant for inclusion of persons with disabilities because it contributes to promote, protect and ensure the rights and inclusion of all persons with disabilities, and promote respect for their inherent dignity in line with Art. 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Democracy

The proposed action will support CSOs promoting spaces for dialogue and creating capacities. The action aims to promote democratic principles and enhance the voice of the most vulnerable people.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The action is conflict sensitive and will promote universal values of peace and tolerance through its activities, particularly in communication initiatives.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The action is not considered relevant for disaster risk reduction

Other considerations if relevant

N/A

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
1. External environment	Destabilization of political situation in Nicaragua	Low	High	Security preparedness and awareness, evacuation plan, regular monitoring
1. External environment	Natural and manmade disasters affecting the business continuity of project personnel.	Medium	Medium	Preparedness and awareness of staff and partners.

1. External environment	Partners are unable to operate in the country because of restrictions	High	High	Monitoring, dialogue with government and partners, risk sharing with other donors, alternative partners (MS, UN). Partners/projects might need to relocate or terminate.
1. External environment	Misunderstanding of the EU communication and /or reputational crisis / disinformation	Medium	High	The EU should (i) adapt its communication strategy to address misunderstandings and disinformation (ii) activate the crisis protocol to avoid or mitigate any possible reputational situation.

Lessons Learnt:

Activities under the support measures - cooperation facility provide a continuation of existing support to the delegation and its partners, which are currently being evaluated to provide lessons learned and best practices to be taken into account for the detailed design of the action. The facility will allow for better coordination and support to partners as well as joint communication activities with MS as well as likeminded actors in the country.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is to support the EU-Nicaragua partnership. It will enable the EU to contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of the EU's cooperation and communication strategies.

The intervention logic is based on:

- Providing, as a continuation and improvement of the solid support carried out through NITA SUPPORT (MIP 2014-2020), long and short-term Technical Assistance and studies and implementing a continuous policy dialogue from the start of the implementation, in a timely, orderly, result-oriented, and concerted manner with the Government, CSOs and other key stakeholders
- Articulating the EU Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy within the EUD (Cooperation Section and Political Section) and outside (EUD + MS) on a long-term strategic horizon

Then: the action will contribute directly to strengthen the EU Cooperation by building capacity for a more effective and efficient implementation of public policies so that the priority areas of the MIP reach maximum results, impact, and visibility and improving gender sensitive strategic plans and budgets:

- The Civil Society, particularly organisations representing groups in more vulnerable situations, will be strengthened by improving the enabling environment for CSOs, increasing CSOs capacity to access and engage in policy dialogue and oversight processes at all levels, especially in the EU's different priority areas of intervention;
- The EU's role as a key cooperation actor and a key interlocutor on policy and political aspects for authorities and Civil Society in Nicaragua will be durably consolidated.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Given the nature of this Action a Logical Framework Matrix is not required at Action level.

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

It is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the Government of Nicaragua

4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁵.

4.3.1 Direct Management (Procurement)

Due to the nature of the project, the chosen method of implementation is direct centralized management. Nicaragua has an active crisis declaration until June 2022 which is expected to be extended for another year.

For outcome 1: *To ensure gender sensitive, professional and technical quality in analysis, preparation/formulation, implementation and management of the EU-Nicaragua cooperation*. This technical assistance contract will be a key instrument to support the implementation of MIP at formulation level, to organise and monitor the structured policy dialogue and public diplomacy.

For outcome 2: *To ensure EU's interventions and policies in Nicaragua respond to youth priorities, perspectives and needs*. This service contract will be responsible for the creation of an inclusive platform for youth participation and to provide a long term Youth technical assistance to support the work of the Delegation

For outcome 3: *To increase public knowledge and understanding of the EU and its role and activities in Nicaragua and support to universal values shared by the EU*. In order to maintain the coherence of EU operations and Team Europe Initiatives, this service contract will be in charge of the development of the long term communication and public diplomacy strategy of the EUD and will do so coherently with its cooperation programme.

4.4 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

⁵ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.5 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.4	
Outcome 1: To ensure gender sensitive, professional and technical quality in analysis, preparation/formulation, implementation and management of the EU-Nicaragua cooperation, composed of	
Procurement Technical Assistance	2 050 000
Outcome 2: To ensure EU's interventions and policies in Nicaragua respond to youth priorities, perspectives and needs, composed of	
Procurement Youth Platform	700 000
Outcome 3: To increase public knowledge and understanding of the EU and its role and activities in Nicaragua and support to universal values shared by the EU, composed of	
Procurement Strategic communication and public diplomacy	1 200 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	50 000
Strategic communication and public diplomacy	N/A
Contingencies	0
Totals	4 000 000

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A matrix of key indicators for the follow up and monitoring of the project will be designed at intervention level for each of the service contracts, this will include impact indicators to monitor the implementation and the communication and public diplomacy strategy for EU Delegation 2023-2027. Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex.

Periodic reports on implementation and joint supervision missions will be the key mechanisms of the monitoring process. Regular technical meetings and an annual joint review will provide for monitoring arrangements.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced.

All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is taking into account the human rights based approach and gender equality.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a final evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of the cooperation's activities in Nicaragua, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements covering all actions implemented in Nicaragua.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The current strategic communication and public diplomacy have proven key to promote EU values and interests and promote enhanced visibility and a better understanding of the EU as a relevant global partner in Nicaragua. Since the socio-political crisis of 2018 and the continuous deterioration of the situation since, the EU has revised its communications strategy to pro-actively promote EU principles and values (through different initiatives and channels) and inform about EU's cooperation impact in the country. Keeping regular dialogue with implementing partners has been fundamental in ensuring aligned messages, as has been a very close coordination with MS and likeminded partners to increase the visibility of the EU and the impact of our initiatives.

Building on the experience of the Partnership Instrument and the other good practices, public diplomacy initiatives will allow to foster and mobilising specific networks, target groups and partners and will allow to connect and leverage existing EU programmes and initiatives for public diplomacy purposes. When relevant, bilateral initiatives involving national initiatives will be connected at the regional and global levels to reinforce the understanding of multilateralism and highlight the role of the EU as a global player. Public Diplomacy initiatives will also reinforce the 'Team Europe' approach and joined-up public diplomacy initiatives could be organised across EU services, EU institutions and with Member States. There will be dedicated funds to support visibility and communication initiatives portraying EU's cooperation work in Nicaragua and for EU public diplomacy initiatives.

In line with priorities of the EU in the country, target audiences identified in the current strategy include journalists, editors and bloggers, opinion leaders, pro-democratic civil society groups and leaders both in country and exile (diaspora), young people, students, academics, cultural sector, women, indigenous people and afro-descendent groups, people with disabilities and beneficiaries of EU development cooperation – who are often the preferred voices to testify about cooperation impacts in our communication activities. In order to coordinate and implement these activities, in some cases other partners have been identified: policy makers-public sector – as appropriate and necessary in the current context; national institutions at a technical level; diplomatic community and international organisations; NGOs and CSOs (both national and international); business community and academia.

The current communication and public diplomacy strategy objectives are: i) Strengthen EU brand's positioning as a global power and relevant partner for Nicaraguans in the promotion of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development and promote EU shared values and principles in this areas; ii) Increase knowledge, understanding and visibility of the Union and its role and activities in Nicaragua, the region and on the world scene, iii) Inform Nicaraguans on the benefits and opportunities of EU development cooperation and its impact on peoples' lives and foster relevant networks, and iv) Develop long-term cultural initiatives in alliance with Member States and key cultural institutions to foster peace-building, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and communicate EU principles, priorities and values.

This proposed action will support an update of the current communication and public diplomacy strategy⁶ on the basis of lessons learned so far and an external evaluation scheduled in 2022, so that it is fine-tuned to the current context. It will also promote international values and principles as well as EU commitments to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, environment and climate change adaptation/mitigation and inclusion and equality.

The strategic communication covers public campaigns and political communication, including Global Gateway, as well as awareness campaigns directed at the general public and activities to commemorate relevant international days. Activities will also include impact monitoring, a mid-term review, specialized training for EU staff, and ad hoc activities with media and target groups as appropriate. As individual programmes will no longer have dedicated visibility actions, there will be a coordinated approach for the promotion of targeted messaging and communication for development cooperation initiatives, also across programmes and implementing partners when relevant.

⁶ Developed in 2017-18 on the basis of a systematic analysis including perception surveys.