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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX III

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan for 2021 part 3 in favour of the Latin America and Caribbean region

Action Document for EU-Central America Cooperation Facility (EUreCA)

ANNUAL PLAN

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

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	EU-Central America Cooperation Facility (EUreCA) CRIS number: LA/2021/043-617 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)/ Overseas Association Decision/European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation Regulation
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Central American region
4. Programming document	Americas and the Caribbean Regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Central American Sub-Window
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Not applicable
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: 17 (partnerships for the goals) Other significant SDGs: SDGs 10 (Reduced inequalities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). Additional SDGs (gender equality, decent work and economic growth, and climate action (SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 13)) are transversally reflected in the action.
8 a) DAC code(s)	151 Government and Civil Society-general 160 Other Social Infrastructure & Services 220 Communications 430 Other Multisector
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	60000 Private sector institution

9. Targets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation Tags: digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship job creation digital skills/literacy digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" 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 Tags: transport people2people energy digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input 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"/>

	Migration (methodology for tagging under development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line: 14 02 01 40 For Regional Programme, specify amount per budget line used: EUR 5 million Total estimated cost: EUR 5 million Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 million			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Direct management through: - Procurement (Service contracts)			
14. Type of measure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The EU-Central America Cooperation Facility (EUreCA) supports the realisation of the potential of the Central American integration process as a driver of sustainable development in the sub-region, promoting stability, peace and the reduction of inequalities. In the spirit of international partnerships, the Facility supports regional and bi-regional dialogue, focusing on common political priorities, including green and blue recovery, digitalisation, gender equality, and the fight against inequalities. The Facility will support strategic communication activities, including large-scale public campaigns, designed to raise awareness, understanding and support for EU political priorities in Central America. It will also facilitate the design and implementation of EU actions in the sub-region, including through activities designed to build, strengthen and connect networks.

Central America is the only sub-region with a fully-fledged, even if not fully ratified, Association Agreement which will remain the overarching political instrument in our political, cooperation and trade relations. While political differences between countries have slowed down the Central American integration process, it has never stopped. At technical level, it has achieved notable results in areas such as economic integration, energy and climate change. The integration process continues to be a force of stability and of positive transformation beyond national politics, and as such, must be supported. The objective of the Facility is to help nurture some of these processes, maximise their impact on the Central American countries, and to promote the EU vision of regional integration as a driver of prosperity and peace, while pursuing greater alignment with the sub-region on the strategic priorities of the EU Global Agenda.

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to support the bi-regional partnership between the European Union and Central America in line with the principles and objectives of the EU-CA Association Agreement, focusing on common political priorities, including green and blue recovery, digitalisation, gender equality and the fight against inequalities. These priorities are reflected in Central American instruments which advance common interests established in the EU-CA Association Agreement and the Agenda 2030: the Regional Environmental Strategy Framework which has a strong link with the Paris Agreement, the Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in the SICA countries, the Regional Digital Strategy of SICA, the Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity, the Integral Social Policy 2020-2040 of SICA, and the SISCA Recovery, Social Reconstruction and Resilience Plan. In particular, this action aims:

1. To support the effective and efficient implementation of EU priorities and programmes in the sub-region, ensuring alignment with broader regional strategies.
2. To support the Central American regional integration process as a driver of stability, peace, sustainable and inclusive development, including through public diplomacy activities designed to build, strengthen and connect regional networks.
3. To raise public awareness, understanding and support for the EU's values, priorities and partnership with the region through strategic communication activities targeting specified audiences.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

EU engagement with Latin America is crucial to ensure a stronger Europe in today's challenging global context. Countries in the region adhere, to a large extent, to EU values and principles and there is a shared ambition between the EU and LAC governments to work together towards a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the region, and particularly Central America, remains characterised by high and increasing degrees of inequality, with the poorer segments of the population (including women, indigenous population, persons with disabilities and other groups) strongly affected by climate change, environmental and biodiversity degradation, violence, poor social conditions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Political volatility and frictions between countries have also re-surfaced in recent years in the sub-region, generating strong concerns in terms of democratic governance, peace and stability. The combined effects of COVID-19 and natural hazards are shrinking the economic and political space for transformative reforms, resulting in internal political tensions, mass migration movements, and violent crime. Progress towards SDGs is at risk in most countries and reversing as regards access to basic social services, food security and nutrition.

This challenging context has not favoured deeper political integration but at technical level, the process has never stopped and continues to be an important driver of peace, stability and development. Regional integration has made notable progress in some areas, such as intra-regional trade with the aim of achieving a customs union, the free movement of citizens through the Agreement between Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, the establishment of a Regional Security Strategy to complement and coordinate national public policies, the development of a regional common process for the procurement of medicines, or the approval of an Integral Regional Social Policy and the Regional Strategy on Climate Change. Recent crises such as COVID-19 and natural hazards have led to greater coordination and response mechanisms, including the Regional Contingency Plan and the Plan for the Recovery, Social Reconstruction and Resilience of Central America and the Dominican Republic.

Most of these advancements have been made possible by continued support by the EU and its Member States, delivered through traditional and innovative approaches. At sub-regional level, cooperation with the Central American Integration System (SICA) under the 2014-2020 MIP has been satisfactory, supporting strategic planning, policy making, inclusion, transparency, and participation of private sector and civil society groups. At this stage, it is crucial to build on this experience and keep contributing to make integration irreversible. In terms of partnership with the EU, Central America is in a very unique position, being the first and so far the only region with a fully-fledged, even if not fully ratified, Association Agreement as the overarching political instrument in our political, cooperation and trade relations. The Association Agreement also embeds the integration ambitions of Central America and has already had a major impact in the region but implementation requires continued commitment and support to fulfil its potential.

2.2 Problem Analysis

The regional integration process of Central America continues to be a driver of development, equality, peace and stability in the region. It supports resilience against global threats such as climate change and COVID-19 but also against the deterioration of democratic governance in some countries. There are positive forces in the sub-region that look at the EU model and push for the realisation of the principles and the ambitions embedded in the EU-CA

Association Agreement. These forces need political, technical and financial support in a partnership spirit to fulfil their transformative potential.

Main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues to be covered by the action:

The main stakeholder is the Central American Integration System (SICA), the institutional framework for Central American regional integration, which was created in 1991 by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, and later joined by Belize in 2000 and the Dominican Republic in 2013.

The system was designed taking into account past experiences of integration in the region as well as lessons inherited from historical facts of the region, such as political crises, armed conflicts and achievements of pre-SICA bodies and institutions. Its primary objective is the integration of Central America as a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development, based firmly on respect, protection and the promotion of human rights.

The stakeholders include regional integration institutions such as the General Secretariat of SICA which has expressed interest in the action, the Secretariat for the Economic Integration in Central America (SIECA), Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), the Central American Social Integration Secretariat (SISCA), the Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA), the Ad-hoc Group of the Regional Digital Strategy (ERDI).

The Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) is the executive arm of the Council of Ministers of the Environment. CCAD was established with the mission of developing a regional regime of environmental cooperation and integration that contributes to improving the quality of life of the populations of its Member States. They are in charge of advancing joint sub-regional strategies and positions on issues like climate change (including joint positions at the COP meetings), biodiversity and sustainable agro-food systems, working with ministries of environment and agriculture.

SIECA is responsible for all the economic activities in relation to the Central American integration process and specialises in matters related to the advancement of the Customs Union and the insertion of the region in world trade.

SISCA operates as the technical and administrative body to guarantee compliance with the regional resolutions regarding the social sector, and to ensure the correct application of the Social Integration Treaty and other regional integration juridical instruments at the regional level as well as the execution of the decisions made by the bodies of the Social Sub-system.

OSPESCA is the regional entity in charge of the strategies, policies and projects regarding the regional regulatory framework conducive to the sustainable development of the activities of a common fisheries policy of the Central American Isthmus.

Amongst others, the stakeholders also include national entities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), particularly organisations representing marginalised population, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous organisations, women groups, and trade unions. Other beneficiaries will be the private sector, academic organisations, and the regional institutions involved in EU cooperation.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The action “EU-Central America Cooperation Facility (EUreCA)” will support the realisation of the potential of the Central American integration process as a driver of sustainable development in the sub-region, promoting stability, peace and the reduction of inequalities. In the spirit of international partnerships, the facility supports regional and bi-regional dialogue focusing on common political priorities, including green and blue recovery, digitalisation, gender equality and the fight against inequalities. The Facility will enable the external projection of

EU political priorities in Central America and facilitate the design and implementation of EU actions in the sub-region. Through strategic communication activities, it will build and strengthen networks and increase public awareness and perception of the EU's partnership with the region.

The Facility is expected to have a specific focus on blue and green recovery, the digital agenda, social cohesion, gender and inclusive development. These sectors represent concrete bi-regional interests in which this action is able to provide well-structured and strategic technical assistance, as well as regional policy dialogue to advance the strategic priorities of the EU. For instance, through green and blue recovery, Central America has the opportunity to unleash innovation, undertake wider reaching and critical restructuring of key sectors, accelerate existing environmental plans, and make use of environmentally sustainable project pipelines, in line with the EU Green Deal and EU priorities.

Digital transformation represents a potential paradigm shift towards an open, democratic, sustainable and competitive society. In Central America, support is required on digital skills, digital infrastructures, digital literacy/education, digitalisation of businesses and public services. This provides a fertile ground to solidify the EU-CA partnership, in coherence with the European Digital Strategy.

In a similar manner, inclusive development is a common priority which has been highlighted as an area to focus on in Central America in the regional MIP. The region continues to be deeply unequal, impoverished and violent, especially as regards gender equality. The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated inequalities and undermined economic perspectives. The technical assistance that the EU will provide will focus on reducing these inequalities, catalysing potential successful initiatives (e.g. Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity, the Integral Social Policy 2020-2040 of SICA, and the SISCA Recovery, Social Reconstruction and Resilience Plan) and increasing resilience in Central America.

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to support the bi-regional partnership between the EU and Central America in line with the principles and objectives of the EU-CA Association Agreement, focusing on common political priorities, including green and blue recovery, digitalisation, gender equality and the fight against inequalities.

The Specific Objectives of this action are:

- To support the effective and efficient implementation of EU priorities and programmes in the sub-region, ensuring alignment with broader regional strategies.
- To support the Central American regional integration process as a driver of stability, peace, sustainable and inclusive development, including through public diplomacy activities designed to build, strengthen and connect regional networks.
- To raise public awareness, understanding and support for the EU's values, priorities and partnership with the region, through strategic communication activities targeting specified audiences.

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

- *Contributing to Specific Objective 1:* Strengthened capacity of the regional and national institutions and organisations to take advantage of the EU-CA Association Agreement, common bi-regional partnership, policy-dialogue, and other EU global agenda initiatives.
- *Contributing to Specific Objective 2:* Increased knowledge, skills, and technical capacities of regional integration institutions, national entities and CSOs to formulate, implement, coordinate and monitor regional policies and initiatives in particular in the focal sectors of the MIP, specially focusing on digitalisation, green and blue recovery and inclusive development.
- *Contributing to Specific Objective 3:* Strategic communication plan designed and implemented, contributing to measurably increase public awareness, understanding and perception of the EU-Central America partnership.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.

Research and innovation activities and studies on relevant issues; knowledge-sharing; capacity building, public policy development and support, policy dialogue; e.g.:

Act. 1.1 – Promote joint innovative and interactive activities with stakeholders such as universities, think-tanks, national government institutions, non-state actors, private sector, among others, conducive to the promotion and implementation of the EU-CA Association Agreement, and the bi-regional policy dialogue.

Act. 1.2 – Organise workshops, seminars, conferences, trainings and other actions to inform on, discuss and/or analyse specific related themes among regional organisations, civil society organisations and/or the general public.

Act. 1.3 – Elaborate widely accessible manuals, guidelines, and reports on the EU-CA Association Agreement implementation.

Act. 1.4 – Promote research, elaborate wide-scope studies and collect statistical information of interest to determine how to best utilise the EU-CA Association agreement to deliver transformative impact.

Act. 1.5 – Provide technical support (including technical assistance, capacity building, and assessments) to develop, implement and/or monitor regional policy issues at local or regional level.

Act. 1.6 – Organise events with key stakeholders (e.g. civil society, private sector, universities and business associations) to discuss the implementation of the EU-CA Association Agreement and the opportunities and challenges related to it.

Act. 1.7 – Provide guidance to relevant stakeholders (e.g. civil society, private sector, universities and business associations) on how to catalyse the EU-CA Association Agreement and the bi-regional policy dialogue.

Activities related to Output 2:

Studies, meetings, information, training (capacity building), public policy development and support, preparation and exchange of lessons learnt and best practices, and any other administrative or technical assistance expenditure necessary for the programming and management of actions, including remunerated external experts; e.g.:

Act. 2.1 – Provide on-the-field technical assistance, training, support, thematic studies and assessments of focal sectors and crosscutting issues (e.g. environment and climate change, gender, disability inclusion, social agenda, digital inclusion and accessibility, policy dialogue, transparency and accountability of regional institutions).

Act. 2.2 – Promote innovative joint CSO initiatives on regional issues in coordination with regional or national institutions.

Act. 2.3 – Provide capacity building to relevant stakeholders (e.g. regional integration institutions, national entities and CSOs) to ensure adequate planning, execution and implementation of strategic regional initiatives.

Act. 2.4 – Deliver technical assistance for key public policy development of mutual bi-regional interests (e.g. MIP focal sectors).

Act. 2.5 – Support the mainstreaming of cross cutting issues (e.g. gender, environment, climate change, disability, indigenous peoples, older persons, youth, migrants, aid effectiveness, human rights and rule of law) in regional policies and cooperation.

Act. 2.6 – Improve the quality of EU's cooperation at regional level, by supporting the identification and formulation of new projects (for instance with specialised inputs and pre-feasibility studies), evaluating programmes, promoting the exchange of good practices and expertise.

Act. 2.7 – Strengthen a common approach between the EU and its Member States providing 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, studies, assessments, etc.

Act. 2.8 – Provide support to strengthen transparency and accountability of regional institutions.

Activities related to Output 3:

Act. 3.1 – 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 profile, awareness, understanding and approval of the EU's partnership with the region. All such campaigns will be data-driven, rigorously tracking hard

KPIs that will allow content to be constantly adjusted in line with evidence of the material and approaches that resonate most successfully with the audience.

Act. 3.2 – Design strategic communication activities to promote general public audiences’ understanding and awareness of the Union's values, interests, specific policies and impact in the region

Act. 3.3 – Promote partnership with media (national television, radio and newspapers as well as international news agencies) for the joint production of audio-visual materials: documentaries, programmes, interviews, films campaign, talk shows, among others.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening

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

The Facility, as a tool to convey EU priorities, policies and common interests on a regional level, will promote the principles of the Green Deal, focusing on accelerating paths towards more environmentally sustainable societies, with low-carbon economies, resilient to the impacts of climate change and protecting their ecosystems and biodiversity. The EU added value of the action will be reflected in the promotion of the EU Green Deal and especially key EU policy documents such as the Adaptation, Biodiversity, Farm to Fork and Circularity strategies.

As part of the policy dialogue with Central American countries, and in coherence with the MIP for the region, the Facility will align its support in promoting the implementation of national and regional environmental commitments of the Central American countries. Furthermore, during its management, the Facility will take in consideration measures to minimise carbon emissions (e.g. optimisations of flight travels, CO2 compensation measures), make use of renewable energies and energy saving measure, reduce waste and assist with reuse and recycling.

Finally, technical assistance and support will be provided to strengthen the regional environmental perspective in Central America, while reinforcing the planning, implementation and monitoring of common priorities and programmes in the sub-region, such as green/blue growth, ensuring alignment with the broader strategies of the EU.

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). The objective of the CRA is to determine potential climate change risks that may affect the achievement of the project objectives, but this particular action, the EU-Central America Cooperation Facility, is focused on strategic technical assistance, hence a limited degree of exposure is prognosticated to the support measures provided to the Central American region.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Central America is one of the most vulnerable regions to the climate crisis, which is why as part of the policy dialogue with the Central American countries, and in line with the MIP for the region, the Facility will align its support in promoting the implementation of national and regional environmental commitments of the Central American countries, focusing on green/blue recovery to promote climate action. Furthermore, during its management, the Facility will take in consideration measures to minimise carbon emissions (e.g. optimisations of flight travels, CO2 compensation measures), make use of renewable energies and energy saving measures, reduce waste and assist with reuse and recycling.

Finally technical assistance and support will be provided to strengthen the regional environmental perspective in Central America, while reinforcing the planning, implementation and monitoring of common priorities and programmes in the sub-region, such as green/blue growth, ensuring alignment with the broader strategies of the EU.

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 gender equality is a significant objective of the Facility, hence throughout the action gender equality and the human rights based approach will be employed as a crosscutting issue in line with the policy priorities of the European Union including the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations 2020–2025 (GAP III). The aim will be to redistribute power, influence and resources in a fair and gender-equal way, tackling inequality, intersectional discrimination based on gender, disability, indigenous backgrounds etc., promoting fairness, and creating opportunity.

Human Rights

This Facility will continue to uphold the long-standing commitment of the European Union towards respecting, protecting and promoting international human rights standards by implementing a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Programming shall be rights-based, individuals and their human rights will be at the centre of all actions. Through a crosscutting HRBA, the Facility will support EU's commitment to human rights of all, and promote a more effective intervention (ensuring national/regional ownership and partnerships around international human rights standards and norms).

The objectives: The objectives of the Facility expressly address the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for all.

The processes: Through the HRBA the processes used in programming, designing and implementing Facility, will aid to further fundamental human rights and freedoms. During these processes, the HRBA working principles will guide the execution: applying all human rights for all; meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making; non-discrimination and equality; accountability and rule of law for all; and transparency and access to information supported by disaggregated data including on sex, age and disability. International human rights instruments and standards will guide the development cooperation and programming throughout the intervention.

The outcomes: The outcomes of the intervention will aim to contribute to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders' to know, claim and enjoy their human rights.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that disability is not a principal but significant objective as part of the strong focus of the Facility on addressing inequalities, human rights and inclusive development in which persons with disabilities are clearly included.

Accessibility to facilities, services and to information of persons with disabilities will be promoted throughout of the activities of the Facility. Reasonable accommodation will be provided for participants with disabilities.

Democracy

The EU-Central America Cooperation Facility (EUreCA) supports the realisation of the potential of the Central American integration process as a driver of sustainable development in the sub-region, promoting stability, peace, and the reduction of inequalities. Hence it aims to assist the strengthening of the regional and national institutions as democratic vectors in line with the principles and interests of the European Union (e.g. the EU's Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights).

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The Overall Objective of this action is to support the bi-regional partnership between the European Union and Central America in line with the principles and objectives of the EU-CA Association Agreement. The EU-CA Association Agreement provides an adequate structure for regional stability and resilience, embodying the common and agreed principles of peace and promoting common development and prosperity. Due to the Central American recent history of military conflicts, the regional integration process became the alternative to move forward as a unified and pacified region, providing a common platform for progress. To support said platform is to strengthen a mechanism of peace and regional resilience. Particular attention will be provided to the migration phenomena in Central America as a priority target and cross-cutting issue, improving management capacities for

human mobility and protecting vulnerable migrants. For instance, by providing support under inclusive development, green recovery, institutional strengthening, and digitalisation.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction is not the principal nor a significant objective for this particular intervention; however technical assistance and support may be provided to strengthen the regional disaster risk reduction strategies and action plans.

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	Lack of political convergence: ambitious policies often fall victims of lack of political interest or political convergence between countries and never get implemented. This risk is even higher in a situation of high political and economic uncertainty.	High	Medium	As a mitigation measure the Facility will focus on areas where the demand is higher and where progress is likely to happen at technical level regardless of high level political differences.
3	A possible lack of efficiency at the various regional and national institutions could lead to a low impact of strategies and a slow implementation of programmes and projects.	Medium	Medium	All initiatives should include a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, and thorough institutional assessments should be carried out.
3	Misunderstanding / disregarding the EU communication and visibility objectives and rules.	Low	Low	The EU should (i) further deepen its relations with regional authorities so as to create more opportunities for joint communication and (ii) improve its communication strategy to promote its values and achievements in the region.
2	The relevance of regional policies,	Medium	Medium	A close follow-up of policy implementation and a permanent and

	sector strategies and instruments may be subject to strategic shifts or delays in strategy implementation.			effective dialogue with all stakeholders (including private sector, other donors, etc.) shall be promoted.
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Lessons Learnt:

- Focus should be on areas where there is common interests between regions, a high Central American regional demand and where progress is likely to happen at technical level regardless of high level political differences.
- Providing technical assistance (TA) to ensure optimal impact, leveraging on existing impact nodes and avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Providing TA based on the demand and requirements of the partner country, regional body or organization. Appropriate dialogue and support must be provided in order to enable a clear formulation of the demand for TA and to locate the suitable required experts.
- Maintaining transparent dialogue and a fluid communication with beneficiary entities to discuss the progress and potential obstacles on the implementation of its support. Any technical assistance must be provided through due process and fully integrated in the technical teams of the institutions to ensure effectiveness and to strengthen capacity building.
- Increasing the capacity to measure the impact of both national policy and EU cooperation strategy. The EU should be able to demonstrate the value for money of its development aid, improving accountability to tax-payers.
- Delivering coherent master messages and a strategic vision of what is "EU partnership" to avoid duplication of efforts and promote a result-driven use of resources.
- Increasing coordination and communication among the different projects, programmes and initiatives of the European Union and Member States.
- The promotion of the EU-Central America Association Agreement (AA) in general, and EU support to the country to benefit from the AA, is a success story of EU branding. This was especially due to the EU being overseeing all the phases of the communication campaign.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is to support the EU partnership with Central America. It will enable the EU to provide strategic support measures to facilitate well-structured and strategic technical assistance, as well as policy dialogue within Central America as a regional mechanism for stability, peace, inclusive and sustainable development. The action seeks to enhance EU opportunities to stimulate policy reforms and promotes the external projection of EU internal policies and the EU global agenda in the sub-region. By targeting the general public through strategic communication, we can measurably increase awareness, understanding and support for the EU's partnership with the region. By doing so, we build support for priorities identified under the EU-Central America partnership.

Furthermore, the project aims at achieving a strengthened capacity of regional integration institutions and associated entities to formulate, implement, coordinate and monitor regional policies and initiatives in the focal sectors of the Central American sub-window, specially focusing on digitalisation, gender equality, peace, sustainable and inclusive development, providing a strengthened capacity of the regional and national institutions and organizations to take advantage of the EU-CA Association Agreement and other global initiatives. A coherent, strategic and measurable communication plan consistent with and designed to raise awareness, understanding and support for the overall partnership between the EU and the region will also be developed.

Assistance will be provided inter alia short-term technical assistance linked to the identification, formulation, monitoring, auditing and evaluation activities necessary to the efficient implementation of the regional programmes. It includes the provision of resources aiming at activities such as: capacity development, organising seminars, meetings, events, awareness-raising campaigns, and training sessions; undertaking thematic studies and publications; exchanging and gathering information; public policy development and support; organising networks; as well as communication and visibility strategic actions, in order to achieve the results and impact of the sub-regional strategy as a whole.

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

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the regional partner country(ies).

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 84 months (60 months for implementation plus 24 months for closure) from the date of adoption of the 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 Budget Support – NOT APPLICABLE

4.4 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 measures¹.

4.4.1 Direct Management (Procurement)

The action will be implemented through one or more service contracts signed and managed by the European Union as contracting authority.

A call for tenders with a suspension clause will be launched in November 2021, before the adoption of this Financing Decision. This exception is due to the fact that the activities should start immediately after adoption of the Financing Decision as the activities under previous support measures will conclude in March 2022; and speedy technical assistance is required to continue supporting key regional efforts on EU strategic regional interests, and reinforcing the Central American integration process as a driver of sustainable development and regional stability.

4.5 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.

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 realization of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.4.1	4,800,000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	200,000
Contingencies	0
Totals	5,000,000

4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The implementation of this project will be led and supervised by the EU (Delegation of the European Union to Costa Rica), with support from INTPA HQ on strategic communications activities as required. In order to ensure buy-in, a Steering Committee will monitor the operation of the project (not binding monitoring and decision making platform). The Steering Committee will be composed by the EU Delegation, representatives of SG SICA, and other beneficiary institutions (e.g. national entities, NGOs, private sector) when necessary. CSOs may be invited as observers.

¹ 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.

4.8 Pre-conditions [Only for project modality]

N/A

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The Steering Committee will approve annual work plans. The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of progress against the work plans will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. The Commission will 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

Considering the nature of the action, it is not foreseen to conduct mid-term and ex post evaluations. The Commission however may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

N.B: The final text on audit/verification depends on the outcome of ongoing discussions on pooling of funding in (one or a limited number of) Decision(s) and the subsequent financial management, i.e. for the conclusion of audit contracts and payments.

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

Regional and global strategic communication and public diplomacy funds will be managed from headquarters.

At country level, action documents for specific sector programmes are no longer required to include a provision for communication actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

To that end, Delegations will first develop short strategic communication and public diplomacy plans that reflect the objectives of the Delegation as a whole in this domain, initially covering the period up to the Mid-Term Review (MTR). The plans will be endorsed by a coordination mechanism comprised of the EEAS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI, and will be reviewed, modified and extended as appropriate as part of the MTR process. The strategic plan will include key administrative information (timeline, budget and the programme manager responsible for implementation) and cover the following:

1. Audiences targeted
2. For each group targeted, the principal communication objective, couched in terms of measurable outcomes
3. The core narrative, formulated in terms not of what we do in the country concerned , but why we do it
4. Preliminary suggestions for content (messages, straplines, hashtags), partnerships (influencers) and channels

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements. The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action, or any succeeding document, shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

In accordance with the information provided, the communication and visibility is to be provided as part of a service contract (procurement-direct management).

Finally, due to the objectives of the EU-Central America Cooperation Facility, it is necessary to provide a specific communication component to promote the bi-regional interests and integration process to the Central American citizens and relevant stakeholders, through strategic communication and visibility designed and implemented to contribute to the understanding and perception of the EU-CA Association Agreement, and the overall EU-Central America partnership.