



Funded by
the European Union



SIEA Lot 3 – Nicaragua – Final Evaluation for NITA SUPPORT Programme 2018/9302

FINAL REPORT

European Commission Framework Contracts - NIDK
Date: 22 September 2022

Draft final Report

Project No.:

By

Mr. Carlos Mauricio Rivera

Mr. Carlos Buhigas Schubert

Presented by

Niras A/S Denmark

This publication was produced with financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of **Niras A/S** and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

ABBREVIATIONS

AECID	Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development
ALLACC	Local Strategic Alliances for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Upper Coco River Basin
APEN	Association of Producers and Exporters of Nicaragua
APIAN	Indigenous Peoples' Alliance
ATI NITA	Technical assistance to the implementation of the strategy of the EU cooperation in Nicaragua
BCN	Central Bank of Nicaragua.
BICU	Bluefield Indian and Caribbean University
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CONIMIPYME	Nicaraguan Council of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DG-INTPA	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
EC	European Commission
EE	Energy efficiency
EIB	European Investment Bank
EM	Evaluation Matrix
ENATREL	National Electric Transmission Company
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegations of the European Union
FUNIDES	Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GoN	Government of Nicaragua
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IL	Intervention Logic
INAFOR	National Forestry Institute
Ind	indicator
ITA	International Technical Assistance
JCs	Judgement criteria
LA	Latin American
LAIF	Latin America Investment Facility
MARENA	Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MSMS	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
NITA Support	Nicaragua Technical Assistance support programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
PISASH	Comprehensive Sectoral Programme for Water and Human Sanitation in Nicaragua
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Steering Group
TA	Technical Assistance
UCA	Central American University
UN	United Nation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

Contents

Contents	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	10
The two interventions under evaluation	12
Findings by evaluation criteria	15
Relevance	16
Effectiveness	20
Sustainability	23
EU added value	25
Cross-cutting issues	27
Cases studies	28
Gender	28
Climate change	30
Overall assessment	30
Conclusions and recommendations	33
Lessons learnt	33
Conclusions	34
Recommendations	35
Annexes	38
Annex 1: ToR of the Evaluation	38
Annex 2: CVs of the evaluators	74
Annex 3: Summary of the evaluation methodology	76
Annex 4: Detailed answers by judgement criteria	78
Annex 5: Intervention Logic	90
Annex 7: Literature and documentation consulted	93
Annex 8: List of persons and organisations consulted	94

Executive Summary

This document presents the draft final report of the final evaluation of 'Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua -ATI NITA- (LA/2017/387-771)' and 'Servicios de comunicación y visibilidad de la cooperación europea en Nicaragua (LA/2018/396-563)'. These interventions formally began their trajectory in August 2015, with the signing of the Financing Agreement for the Technical Assistance Program to Support Nicaragua as a joint initiative between the Government of Nicaragua (GoN) and the European Union. Its overall objective was to *"contribute to the national goal of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law"*. Also the specific purpose was to: contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of EU public policies and cooperation activities, which will ensure that the sectors prioritized by the Counter Strategy Paper 2014-2020 achieve maximum results, impact and visibility.

However, due to challenges encountered in the political dialogue with the government, it was very difficult to coordinate the necessary mechanisms to initiate the implementation of the program, and for that reason the EU Delegation (EUD) decided to divide it into 15 contracts that directly responded to the requirements of EU cooperation in the country. The interventions evaluated in this report are among these contracts which corresponded to the reasons and goals of the NITA program, (specifically result 1, activity 1 and result 2 of the signed Financing Agreement).

The main objectives of the evaluation of these two interventions is to provide an overall independent assessment of the performance, and to identify key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future interventions. In particular, the evaluation aims at providing lessons and recommendations to guide the formulation of a new support measure program by the EU Delegation in Nicaragua for the next programming cycle 2022-2024. In order to achieve these objectives and following what is stated in the ToR, an evaluation team of two experts was commissioned through NIRAS International Consulting. The evaluation was carried it out virtually, without a physical presence in Nicaragua. However, the limitations deriving from the remote evaluation and lack of in-country presence, have been compensated by carrying out 26 in-depth interviews and a detailed review of around 60 documents concerning the two projects.

In line with the ToR, the following evaluation criteria were assessed in the two interventions: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, EU added value and Crosscutting issues.

- Relevance.** Based on all the analysis made, it is possible to indicate that the two interventions are highly relevant in terms of alignment with the priorities and needs of the final beneficiaries, coherence with the national and institutional policy framework and alignment with the priorities of EU cooperation in the country. However, this relevance is reduced by considering aspects of design quality, especially with regard to the use of the logical framework as a dynamic tool, the limited and indefinite starting assumptions and risk matrix, and the limited participation and ownership of intervention actors. Limited by external factors, certainly, but at last limited. Taking into account the four aspects, it is possible to indicate that the overall relevance of the two interventions is adequate.
- Effectiveness.** In order to address this criterion, two aspects will be analyzed: the results of the two interventions and their contribution to the achievement of the specific objective. ATI NITA was aimed at providing technical assistance on demand to the beneficiary institutions, making available a long-term expert and at the same time TL of the same that remained unchanged from the beginning, 37 short-term missions and 5 medium-term missions (more than 6 months, which allowed the assignment of a support expert cat II in the areas of indigenous peoples (2), Gender (2) and poverty statistics (1)). The short-term experts were mostly local experts (72 per cent) and were mainly oriented towards the development of studies, analyses, diagnoses, advice, formulation, seminars and workshops. ATI NITA has encountered delays and difficulties in various activities implemented, as well as problems regarding the quality of the products and the quality of the experts hired. In relation to the destination of short-term expert assignments, they were gender-oriented (26% of total days/experts), with 12

missions especially in 2018, 2019 and 2020; and indigenous peoples (21% of total days/experts), with 3 missions (including medium-term ones as we have already mentioned), in 2020 and 2021. Support for national poverty statistics ranks third with 13% of the days/expert assigned, as well as monitoring the socio-economic data of COVID in 2020 and 2021, the fourth position (12%). It is followed by one-off assignments for the youth and child labor sectors in the country (10% total days/expert), climate change support (9% total days/expert) with 10 missions especially in 2018 and 2019, various analyses of the country's political and social situation (6% of the total days/expert) and the productive sector with 2% with just two missions. Also, the EU Communication and Visibility Services in Nicaragua executes many activities and achieved several results, especially in eight main axes: Storytelling and story making campaigns oriented to the general public; "tell me about Europe" to primary school students; "Confluencias/Confluences" aimed at communication students and influencers in social networks at the UCA; "Club Erasmus Nicaragua" oriented to students/entrepreneurs/universities; European days for development, aimed at young entrepreneurs; permanent monitoring office and generation of success stories for the EUD website; and promotion of EU values through art and culture oriented to the general public with celebrations of Human Rights Day, International Women's Day and Europe Day, among others. The second intervention had to cancel about more than 25 activities both because of security problems UED to the current political crisis and for health and health reasons in relation to the Covid-19. On the other hand and taking into account the ToR and especially their original specific objectives, the evaluation team found that the two interventions faced great difficulties that limit the overall achievement of the expected outputs, and its effectiveness has therefore been limited.

- Sustainability.** Sustainability scores much better in terms of the knowledge and social capital generated through the different activities of both projects, particularly on one hand products that derive from the missions and remain highly relevant; the uptake of a number of lessons from the past period that result precisely from the difficulties faced. The constant monitoring of the evolution of the country have been integrated into the modus operandi of the projects and turned into a strength (resilience capacity) to be capitalised from, with new skills and many lessons learned. However, the institutional environment poses a clear barrier to the sustainability of the services provided through both projects, but particularly ATI-NITA. It is characterized by the absence of a credible platform for political and technical dialogue, a socio-political context deteriorating even more and the continuation of tensioned relations with a number of cooperation partners (including the EU) the *raison d'être* of ATI-NITA was to provide on demand and continuous technical support and advice to Government institutions. This is paused for the time being and it is not likely to change, which directly affects the sustainability of its own purpose. Also, the low prospects of financial sustainability. In ATI-NITA there may be some activities that concentrated on providing technical expertise on certain areas (e.g. generating statistics), which are more likely to meet financial opportunities provided by other donors or the Government in order to guarantee their sustainability over time. But for most areas, like those linked to work with LAs or NGOs will be less predictable and further support is needed. In that sense it is difficult to see how the sustainability of ATI-NITA does not depend on the willingness of the EU to continue financing it. The case of Communication and Visibility, due to the atypical nature of the project, is somewhat different. Although it has received both support and interest from different stakeholders and audiences, it is not really a project as such but rather part of the regular communication efforts of the EUD and, thus, it is not sustainable without the EUD maintaining it.
- EU Added value.** Despite the increasingly difficult socio-political context, the EU added value has been reflected in the capacity of both projects to reach out to a broad spectrum of partners and in the implementation approaches to pursue EU cooperation in accordance with priorities for the programming period 2014-2020. The following shows that systematizing examples of concrete actions and synergies (with other regional and sub-regional EU initiatives), have taken place but perhaps at a lower rate than when the projects were conceptualized. Synergies take place mostly within the country, where the vast majority of activities supported by both projects have focused. Examples from ATI-NITA are the implementation process of bi-lateral projects such as 'Local Alliances for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Coco river basin (ALLAC)', 'Proyecto para la implementación del Segundo

Programa de Apoyo a la estrategia del sector educación en Nicaragua (PROSEN II), 'Agua Managua', 'Programa Integral Sectorial de Agua y Saneamiento Humano de Nicaragua (PISASH)', and the formulation of other interventions such as Trade and sustainable development. 'Communication and Visibility' has contributed with activities that are different in nature if compared to other more traditional development projects. Examples of those include 'Juntos por Nicaragua', 'Confluencias', 'Día Internacional de la Mujer', 'Cuéntame Europa'. Also, cooperation with other EU actors have taken place in different forms: Cooperation with individual EU countries or bilateral agencies. Both the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo (AECID) and the German Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) have participated in different forms like, for example in the project ALLACC (Local Alliances for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Coco river basin); and as part of the Team Europe approach there are examples, linked to Objective A2.3 (Supporting the implementation of joint programming) though different types of interventions

- Crosscutting issues.** Based on the evidence collected by the evaluation team, the legacy of both projects in crosscutting issues is strong, based on: (1) many activities through both interventions have address inequality issues in many different forms. One area where particular attention has been placed, is the EUD's relationship with CSOs and marginalized communities. Even when the enabling environment for CSOs began to deteriorate, the level of engagement with them and with marginalized communities has continued and activities have been kept, trying to reach out, to empower, to represent, and to increasingly defend vulnerable groups; (2) extensive work has also been done on the implementation processes through civil society organizations, showing a continuous support for CSOs in the country, particularly at a time when the enabling environment has worsened enormously. Examples of that support are showcased in Cross-cutting issues. Despite these examples not having been presented and systemized throughout the progress reports, rights-based approach is a very positive element in both contracts. Even in the EU Communication and Visibility contract, whose nature may not be that familiar with development related concepts and strategies, rights-based issues have been made highly visible across its action. In short, both projects have provided a clear framework where crosscutting issues, such as engagement with civil society and gender mainstreaming (as clearly described in the previous section), have been thoroughly integrated in the different activities, together with the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.

Lessons learnt

The following lessons learnt have been collected during the evaluation process of the two interventions:

- ✓ In order to improve the quality of the design, it is necessary to assume and promote the use of the logical frameworks as a dynamic tool. There are few occasions when implementing entities assume the need to translate partial or broader changes from the strategy into logical frameworks. However, it would be very beneficial for the entire management of the project cycle to carry out annual or periodic review exercises of the LFs, in coordination and dialogue with the UED itself, in order to adjust the entire intervention logic to the challenges faced.
- ✓ It is important for the new program, to contrast other possible ways of implementation, such as management by delegated cooperation, which would have implied more autonomy to the interventions for their development. To this end, it is important to investigate best practices as well as the development of statistical contracts managed by the IDB and the possibility of collecting information and interviewing those in charge.
- ✓ The approach to Communication and Visibility has changed. It is not a complementary activity linked to EU projects but rather a central part of how the EU portrays itself; what it stands for, the role it plays in the world, in the country and through which activities. This is an ongoing learning process into a more professionalized approach towards communication. The political crisis in Nicaragua has affected the capacity to implement activities and communicate. In this sense, a good asset developed by the project has been the review of the evolution of the political and socio-economic context of the country, accompanied by a monitoring of media outlets and, as a result, how to place activities and messages in the most appropriate way.

- ✓ An important effort has been undertaken in terms of having a better understanding of a rich and diverse map of actors to partner with across the territory, develop a more continuous relationship and, as a result, build a (revised) strategy to position the EU in the country. The situation with some of the stakeholders involved (universities, LAs, CSOs) has worsened and that trend is likely to continue, affecting future activities (new cancellations) and/or not being able to reach certain audiences.
The political context, the increasing censorship and the pressure on some of the actors involved in the activities have provoked the need to adapt to overcome obstacles and, at the same time, learn about the impact of the activities. Three essential insights that derived from it are: 1) the resilience of the EUD despite serious crises; 2) the importance of communication based on facts and participation (e.g. ambassadors who go to the field or are seen in events related to European values); 3) activities accompanied by consistent messages regardless of the channels used.

Conclusions

- Both ATI/NITA and Communication and Visibility were designed as part of the complementary support measures for the Cooperation Strategy of the European Union in Nicaragua for the period 2014-2020, to assist in actions covering the productive sector, with a focus on rural areas; effective education for employment, and adaptation to climate change. The change of political conditions in Nicaragua and the resulting crisis undermined the dialogue with the Government and, with it, the capacity to implement EU cooperation as initially planned. The consolidation of an increasingly authoritarian leadership has fostered a very hostile climate for the normal implementation of the projects.
- However, a cooperation project is not the ideal instrument to respond to short-term contingencies that demands rapid response. Continuously forcing the two interventions into this situation, and especially ATI NITA, has in some way led to the denaturation of the mission for which they were conceived, the establishment of a short-term crisis management concept (which needed the resources already), which had an impact on the quality of the services provided.
- Despite the difficulties, the cooperation with other actors has remained and become a strong asset of both projects. On one hand, the EU has continued to show a clear commitment to support civil society and disadvantaged communities. On the other, linkages have been established and the continuous relation with a wide range of relevant actors, from media, schools and universities to individuals and Erasmus+ beneficiaries.
- The logical framework is fundamental for the strategic management of a cooperation intervention, and it is logical that it evolves together with the project. However, neither of the two interventions made an addendum to modify the logical framework, keeping the original, despite the fact that for reasons known to all, the government counterpart did not cooperate in the aforementioned activities, leaving the main activity meaningless in the case of ATI NITA, and without a strategic partner, in the case of the EU's communication and visibility services in Nicaragua.
- In relation to the hypotheses and identified risks from the proposal of the two evaluated interventions, it is instructive that these were very general and indefinite. None of them foresaw the probability of what happened in reality: the null dialogue with the government that prevents the implementation of the planned activities and forced the projects to reorient themselves towards other sectors: civil society
- The political crisis and its consequences have also challenged the potential sustainability through a number of ways: the institutional environment, without a normalized dialogue with the Government, undermines the main objective of ATI-NITA; the increasing censorship and threats to basic freedoms is conditioning the capacity of both projects to work with a certain degree of normality with many of the stakeholders involved (media, independent journalists, universities, CSOs, LAs, etc), which are facing increasing scrutiny and pressure from the Government; the capacity to provide the technical expertise has also encountered problems.
- Sustainability scores much better in terms of the knowledge and social capital generated through the different activities of both projects, including a more conflict sensitive approach to design and

implement activities; secondly, there have been remarkable progress in the field of gender; thirdly, both interventions have kept up the efforts targeting different forms inequality issues through a considerable number of activities that provide a good picture about the evolving situation of the country; fourth, both have shown a solid support to a rights-based approach where crosscutting issues have been thoroughly integrated in the different activities, together with the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination; lastly, there is a better understanding about the state of knowledge and opinion about the EU as well as about how to position the EU in the country.

Recommendations

- **A Stakeholder mapping** is an important management tool to keep track of a varied array of participating actors and their expectations. That mapping is very effective in combination with **knowledge management tools**. These are critical to get “under the skin” of the progress of development interventions and make permanent improvements, if possible together with partners and other relevant actors.
- A well done **risk matrix** (or assessment) is often ignored as an extremely valuable management tool. This is particularly useful now for the EU and its partners, especially bearing in mind that it has already developed a conflict sensitive approach.
- Linked to all the previous, **capacity building** remains essential, not only for ATI-NITA. The development of network enhancing activities and the exchange of experience, can reinforce considerably the performance and progress of many different areas of both projects, from the identification of expertise to improving advocacy. More brainstorming sessions, peer-to-peer training, and the exchange of experiences, establishing working groups on particular areas linked to the agreed priorities could be very useful. The knowledge gained in gender during the last phase would be an ideal space to promote more specialization and operationalisation of gender action, in line with the lines of action recommended to materialize the gender assessment undertaken during this period.
- It is necessary to evaluate other forms of deployment in the field of the project, such as thematic experts who accompany the entire period or a large part of it (2-3 years). The project will be implemented in a way that experts specialised in climate change, gender and the productive sector (agro-industrial if possible) coexist and work together, with the aim of giving a decisive impulse to the project's actions in the first 2 years of the project. Subsequently, the main coordinator and thematic expert would stay on to supervise the actions already designed and implemented by his or her colleagues.
- Ideally that process of strengthened interactions, knowledge and exchange would link up to both the planning and implementation of each other (ATI-NITA and Communication and Visibility), other EU projects (ideally including the sub-regional level or other relevant EU regional initiatives like Eurosocial, Euroclima or Adelante), a more vigorous Team Europe presence and the support of other like-minded donors and important actors in Nicaragua and the sub-region. In other words, how to maximize the impact of European cooperation.
- Link all that experience to a user-friendly Knowledge Bank, able to extract a wealth of reflections and lessons learned for collective thinking and improved management. This should involve systematizing also good practices and success stories. As a result of this process, the establishment of links within the country, mutual learning and the shared creation of solutions could increase the impact of the activities and, on the basis of the knowledge collected, additional techniques could be applied to understand the behavioural components that, for example, could trigger institutional change in Nicaragua. This could even be of great interest for other EUDs going through processes of democratic regression or the absence of political dialogue.

Introduction

This document presents the draft final report of the final evaluation of 'Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua -ATI NITA- (LA/2017/387-771) and Servicios de comunicación y visibilidad de la cooperación europea en Nicaragua (LA/2018/396-563)'.

These interventions formally began their trajectory in August 2015, with the signing of the Financing Agreement for the Technical Assistance Program to Support Nicaragua as a joint initiative between the Government of Nicaragua and the European Union. Its overall objective was to *“contribute to the national goal of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law”*. Also the specific purpose was to: *contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of EU public policies and cooperation activities, which will ensure that the sectors prioritized by the Counter Strategy Paper 2014-2020 achieve maximum results, impact and visibility*¹.

The 'Nicaragua Technical Assistance Support' (NITA-SUPPORT) project was meant to contribute to building capacity for a more effective and efficient implementation of public policies and EU cooperation activities, ensuring that the focal sectors achieve maximum results, impact and visibility. NITA-Support was meant to be the instrument to optimize the effectiveness and the efficiency of EU interventions in Nicaragua and to contribute to mitigate the risks and draw the lessons from the EU's previous experience of cooperation in the country.

However, due to challenges encountered in the political dialogue with the government, it was very difficult to coordinate the mechanisms to initiate the implementation of the program, and for that reason the EUD decided to divide it into 15 contracts that directly responded to the requirements of EU cooperation in the country. Among these contracts were those that are now evaluated, which are those that most corresponded to the reasons and goals of the NITA program, specifically result 1, activity 1 and result 2 of the signed Financing Agreement².

These two contracts were launched for public tender in January 2016 and began their implementation period in September 2017 (ATI NITA) and in March 2018 (the EU Communication and Visibility Services in Nicaragua). After facing multiple challenges - which we will go on to detail later - as well as a constant adaptation to the turbulent environment derived from the popular protests of April 2018 and the closure of political spaces in the country, both interventions are preparing to conclude their implementation periods in December 2022.

It is necessary and justified to carry out the final evaluation of the two interventions, in order to fulfill the mandate of the European Commission on the evaluation of initiatives funded by public funds at a general level, and specifically to contribute to decision-making through a systematic and independent assessment of the achievements, the quality and the results of these two interventions. The main objectives of the evaluation of these two interventions is to provide an overall independent assessment of the performance, and to identify key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future interventions. In particular, the evaluation aims to provide lessons and recommendations to guide the formulation of a new support measure program by the EU Delegation in Nicaragua for the next programming cycle 2022-2024.

In order to achieve these objectives and following what is stated in the ToR, an evaluation team of two experts was commissioned through NIRAS International Consulting³. The evaluation was carried out remotely, without a physical presence in Nicaragua. The limitations derived from the lack of in-country presence have been compensated by carrying out 26 in-depth interviews and detailed review of around 60 documents on the two projects⁴.

The following limitations to the scope of the evaluation are highlighted:

¹Financial Agreement NITA Support Programme, August 2015.

²Outcome 1, activity 2, was developed by the IDB for statistical support. FA, NITA Support Programme, CCEE, 2015.

³The team is made up of Carlos Rivera, Team Leader and expert in evaluation and cooperation, and Carlos Buhigas Schubert, Key Expert in cooperation.

- The scope of this evaluation is specifically limited to the two interventions: ATI NITA and EU communication and visibility services in Nicaragua, covering the period from their beginning until June 2022. Therefore, neither other cooperation projects funded by the EU during this period nor wider EU cooperation in Nicaragua are included.
- The political situation in Nicaragua has naturally had an effect on the implementation of the two projects subject to this evaluation. The political context of Nicaragua is, however, not analyzed in depth in this report, since it is beyond the scope of this evaluation.
- This evaluation applies the OECD DAC criteria. As defined in the ToR, only the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and EU added value are covered.
- Finally, the two evaluations are carried out jointly, aiming to identify connections and relationships between them, rather than assessing them separately.

To carry out the final evaluation, an approximation process based on the scientific method has been followed, which based on the ToR has consisted of the following phases and specific steps:

Table 1

Phases followed and main activities of the evaluation process of the 2 interventions	
INCEPTION PHASE	
Initial review of background documents	
Meeting: kick off	
Initial interviews with key stakeholders	
Elaboration of Intervention Logic/Theory of Change	
Finalisation of the Evaluation Questions and methodology	
Elaboration of Evaluation Matrix and final workplan	
Preparation of the Inception Report	
Remote presentation of the Inception Report	
Review of the report (as relevant) following receipt of comments	
INTERIM PHASE	
In-depth analysis of relevant documents and other sources	
Selected remote interviews and other to support the analysis of data	
Formulation of the preliminary responses to each Evaluation Question	
Conducting interviews, focus groups and virtual meetings at different stakeholders	
Preparation of a Desk Report and a slide presentation of preliminary findings	
Remote presentation to the Reference Group	
SYNTHESIS PHASE	
Analysis and synthesis of the evidence and data collected during the previous phases	
Preparation of the Draft Final Report	
Remote presentation of the Draft Final Report	
Preparation of a response to the draft QAG	
Preparation of the Executive Summary of the Final Report	

This final evaluation report is the result of the processing of all the information collected through interviews and key documents and products of the two interventions⁵.

Table 2

Details of primary and secondary sources of information used in the assessment process		
Type	Sources of information	Number
Compilation and analysis of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NITA Support Programme Documents • ATI NITA Key documents • Comm & visibility key documents • EU framework key documents • Nicaragua government key documents • Key stakeholders involved key documents (institutional planning, etc.) 	50 (over)
In-depth interviews of the two interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATI NITA and ATI Comm&visibility • UED staff involved • Beneficiary projects involved • CSOs 	26 (with technicians and Officials)
Feedback Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 virtual presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start report - Desk report 	22 (participants)

⁵An overview of the evaluation methodology is presented in Annex 3.s

In the next sub-section we summarize the two interventions subject to this evaluation, define their life cycle and establish their achieved main milestones and main difficulties. In section 4 we present the findings, structured by each of the chosen evaluation criteria and the cross-cutting axes highlighted in the ToR (gender, environment, emphasis on the indigenous population). Section 5 is dedicated to presenting the case studies of gender and climate change. In section 6 we present an overall assessment. Finally, the lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in section 7 on the evidence presented in the findings section. The annexes to this report include the ToRs of the Evaluation (Annex 1), the summary the CVs of the evaluators (Annex 2), the summary of the evaluation's methodology (Annex 3), the answers to the evaluation questions (annex 4), the intervention logic (annex 5), a relevant geographic map (annex 6), the literature and the documentation consulted (annex 7) and the list of persons and organizations consulted (annex 8).

The two interventions under evaluation

Following the ToR, this evaluation focuses on two interventions taking place under NITA Support programme: The Technical Assistance to implement the EU cooperation strategy with Nicaragua (ATI NITA) and the EU Communication and Visibility Services in Nicaragua.

To give preliminary answers to the evaluation questions indicated in the inception report (which correspond to the chosen DAC evaluation criteria), it is necessary to reconstruct the life cycle of each project, identifying its crucial junctures, especially at the administrative and management level, as well as the main conjunctures that have affected them. This step is important for the two projects under evaluation, since to understand the developments and changes that they underwent from the beginning it is necessary to map out the temporal path of each one and the main socio-political events they faced.

ATI NITA

The overall objective of the project, which coincides with the one of the NITA programme, is to contribute to the national objective of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law, by supporting a more effective and efficient implementation of EU public policies and cooperation activities, which will ensure that the sectors prioritized by the CSP achieve maximum results, impact and visibility.

The specific objective of this intervention according to the ToR, is to: *Strengthen the capacities of ministries, decentralized bodies and other institutions linked to the implementation of the European Union Country Strategy Paper for Nicaragua (CSP 2014-2020), in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies, especially in relation to the three priority areas (productive sector, effective education for employment, adaptation to climate change). The technical assistance service will seek to promote that European cooperation in Nicaragua achieves maximum results and impact, integrating the gender approach and ensuring proper reporting based on objective and quantifiable data.*

The results to be achieved consist of:

- Advice to the Government of Nicaragua (GoN) regarding the formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies mainly in the sectors of the IPM 2014-2020.
- Development of mechanisms, instruments and competences to achieve a positive impact on the implementation of EU projects (identification, formulation and implementation), and adequate reporting on them, in the framework of the EU Results Framework, particularly projects in the sectors of the IPM 2014-2020.
- Support for a proper mainstreaming of the gender approach in EU cooperation in Nicaragua, in line with the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020.
- If necessary, accompany the implementation process of joint programming.

The ToR also defines the particularity of this TA, as a "transversal" Technical Assistance towards the MIP priority sectors, aimed at facilitating a well-structured and strategic capacity building process, reducing transaction costs. In capacity building, innovative ways such as learning and knowledge management platforms

and peer-to-peer training be explored, as well as possible proposals or solutions to facilitate the retention of human resources trained by the projects, among others. Missions for studies (including gender formulations and profiling), training and events also were implemented under this contract.

This action not result in the creation of a specific project implementation unit: **it is an instrument managed by the Delegation of the European Union in Nicaragua to provide a prompt and efficient response to specific needs for capacity building and formulation and management of actions related to the focal sectors of the MIP.**

In addition, the intervention had a national coverage, and the target groups would be all government entities linked to the implementation of the MIP. Actions with Civil Society and specific actions of the Delegation with both target groups were included.

Based on the semi-annual technical reports, as well as on the mission control of ATI NITA, it is possible to reconstruct the life cycle of this intervention, which we present in the diagram below⁶:

ATI NITA derives from NITA support programme which was developed as a result of the financial agreement signed between the EU and the Nicaraguan government through the Ministry of Foreign Relations (MINREX) on August 6, 2015. In January 2016, the ToR for the international tender of the project was launched, yet the implementation of the project started in September 2017. At the end of the inception phase, ATI NITA faced a turbulent conjuncture of political and social crisis that changed the country in April 2018. The first addendum to the contract was signed in July 2018 based on an extension of the days of the Senior Expert EP, creating two categories of Experts (senior and junior) and increasing the contingency budget. In November 2019, the 2nd addendum followed aiming at increasing the working days of category III and II experts, and including professional service expenses in translation, design and drivers in the budget. On the 20th of March 2020, the first documented death of COVID-19 occurred, which had multiple consequences on the social-economic and political life of the country that are well known. A third addendum was requested in November 2020, focusing on increasing short-term expert days again (category II and III). A fourth addendum followed 6 months later (31/05/2021), in order to increase the total budget to € 1.955 M and the extension of the operational phase to 58 months (13 additional months to June 2022); together with an administrative fiat in order to adjust the remaining values of the working days of the short-term experts. A third conjunctural element that affected the project, resides in the electoral cycle around the presidential elections of November 2021 which had an impact on the political and social polarization of the country before and after this date. Finally, with the fifth addendum to the ATI NITA contract, its period of operations is extended until December 2022.

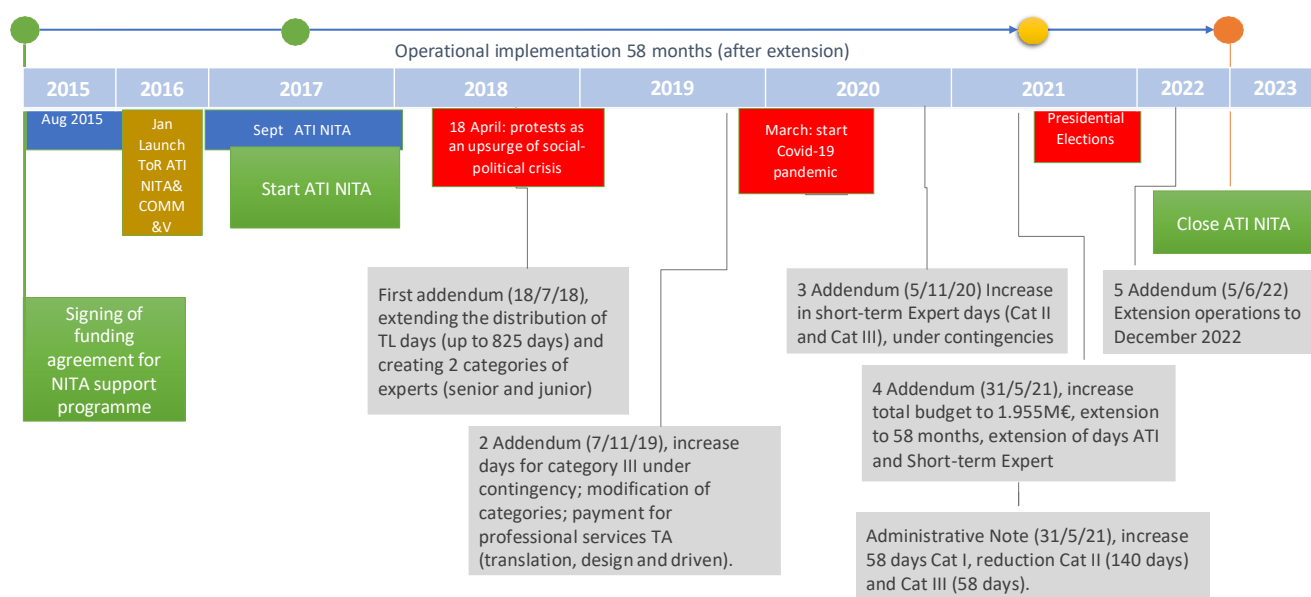


Figure 1: ATI NITA Lifecycle

⁶Reconstruction based on the 9 Progress Reports of ATI NITA, as well as the 4 addenda and 1 administrative order.

Communication and Visibility Services of the EU Cooperation in Nicaragua

The overall objective of the second project is *to provide specialized strategic communication services for the implementation of annual communication plans for EU cooperation in Nicaragua.*

The specific objectives are the following:

- To carry out an in-depth qualitative analysis, update and consolidation (annual work plans, creation of a set of result and impact indicators and monitoring methodology) of the "Communication Strategy 2018-2020 of the European Union - Nicaragua cooperation" as well as the communication diagnosis.
- Implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the "EU-Nicaragua Communication Strategy 2018-2020" through annual communication plans.

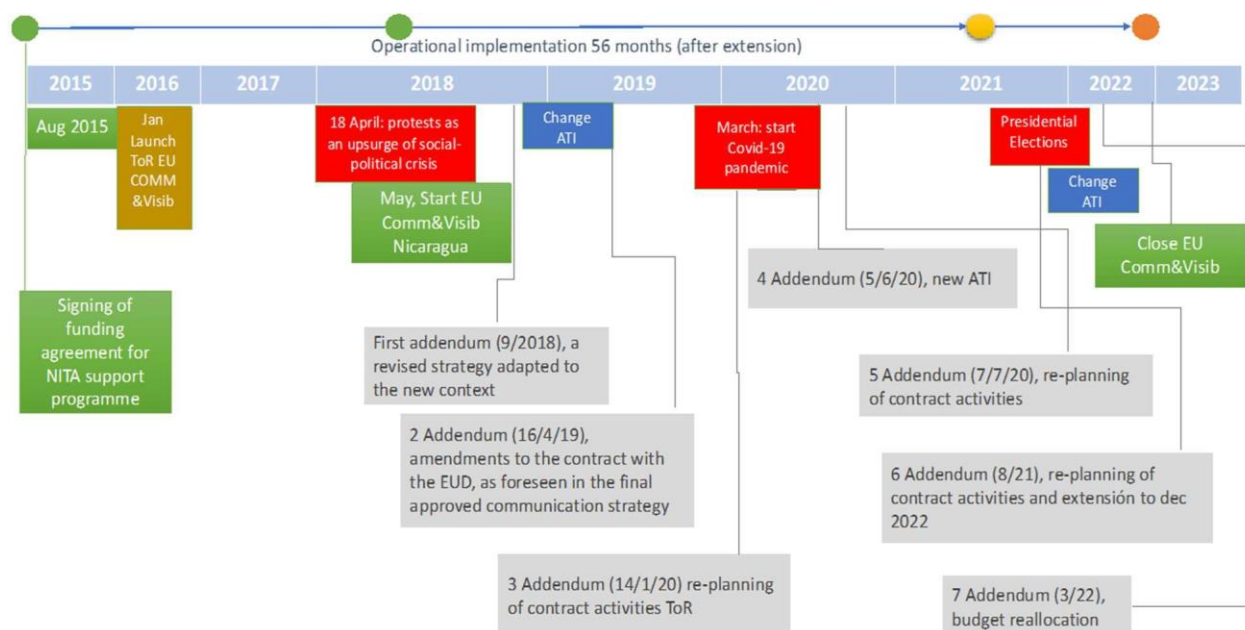
The results to be achieved consist of:

- In-depth qualitative analysis, updating and consolidation of the "EU-Nicaragua Cooperation Communication Strategy 2018-2020" and communication diagnosis, especially:
 - Analyze the communication strategy and propose eventual improvements from a strategic communication perspective. Those that can endure over time and become symbols and icons of the EU's communication in relation to its cooperation should be chosen;
 - Link communication on EU cooperation in Nicaragua to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
 - Create a matrix of indicators (KPIs) linked to the strategy and based on the communication diagnosis, which are clear and measurable, with time tracking (baselines, monthly, six-monthly and annual targets); this matrix should also link communication objectives with actions, messages and target audiences and how these activities contribute to the achievement of the indicators;
 - Qualitative analysis of the communication diagnosis, completing it (with additional surveys or data analysis, etc.), in order to better focus the EU's communication efforts: for example, characteristics and level of media consumption (traditional and digital), level of penetration, access and use of the internet, characterization of target audiences (especially millennials) and Nicaraguan culture, among others;
 - Create an action plan that is divided into annual communication plans for each year of contract execution;
 - It introduces in the strategy clear elements on how to create a "gender and human rights narrative" as a cross-cutting but at the same time essential axis of EU communication.
- Implementation and management of the improved version of the Communication Strategy for EU cooperation in Nicaragua, ensuring that the objectives and the different activities are fulfilled as planned, as well as creating the necessary instruments for its follow-up.

Based on the half-yearly technical reports and the documents compiled, it is possible to reconstruct the life cycle of this intervention, which we present in the diagram below⁷.

⁷Reconstruction based on the 8 intervention progress reports and the 7 addenda made.

Figure 2: Communication and Visibility Services of the EU Cooperation in Nicaragua Life cycle



This project also derives from the NITA support programme, which was developed after the ratification of the financial agreement which was signed between the EU and the Nicaraguan government through the Ministry of Foreign Relations (MINREX) on August 6, 2015. As a result, in January 2016 the ToR for the international tender of the project were launched and the project formally began in May 2018, fully coinciding with the rise of the country's political crisis and its authoritarian escalation at all levels. Already in the kick-off meeting the importance of modifying the communication strategy to the new context was pointed out, which was carried out in the last quarter of the year and which gave rise to the first addendum, to include the new strategy developed. It was followed by a change of the main expert in February 2019 and a second addendum to incorporate the amendments to the contract derived from the new strategy (16/04/2019). A third addendum came on the 14th of January 2020 to replan the activities of the contract, followed by a fourth addendum (05/06/2020) and a fifth addendum (07/07/2020), which sought to renew the activity plan of the project in the new context derived from the abrupt intrusion of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The sixth addendum to the contract was oriented to the extension of the contract and replanning of activities accordingly (08/2021), and finally, a seventh addendum focused on the modification of the project budget was signed (03/2022). Another new socio-political situation occurred with the cycle of presidential elections around November 2021 and polarized, even more, the fragile balances in the country. A replacement of the main ATI took place and finally with the extension of the operational implementation period to 56 months of Addendum 6, the project will close in December 2022.

Findings by evaluation criteria

In this section we present the findings by selected evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions. Specifically, and in line with the ToR, the following evaluation criteria will be assessed in the two interventions⁸:

- **Relevance:** the alignment of the strategies and instruments used in the two interventions with the main needs of the Nicaraguan society, with the Nicaraguan National Policy Framework and with the EU cooperation framework in the country, in the CA sub-region and in the LA region.
- **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the various activities implemented in the two interventions achieved the chain of outcomes and outputs that enabled the achievement of the strategic objectives of each one.
- **Sustainability:** the real possibility that the benefits of both projects will continue after the project has ended.

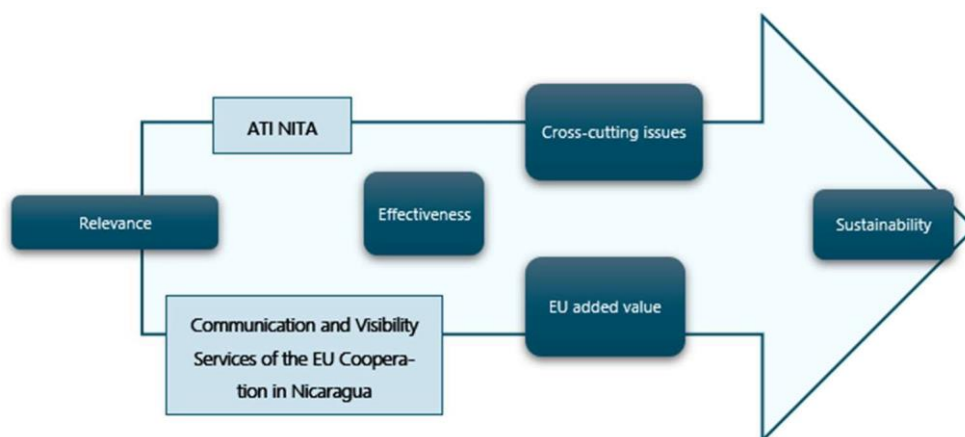
⁸According to the ToR, the final evaluation will not include the coherence and efficiency of the intervention (UED to the small budget of the 2 interventions and the main purpose of the evaluation). ToR, pp.10

- **EU Added value:** the extent to which the intervention brings additional benefits to what would result from Member States interventions only in the partner country, in line with the principle of subsidiarity defined in the 5th Article of the Treaty on European Union.
- **Crosscutting issues:** the extent to which gender equality and women's empowerment, environment and adaptation to climate change were mainstreamed; the relevant SDGs and their interlinkages were identified; the principle of Leave No One Behind and the rights-based approach methodology were followed.

At this point, it is pertinent to recall that the evaluation criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention against its intervention logic. This is because the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project are assessed by its contribution to achieving the specific objectives, the overall objectives and its ability to endure over time, once the funding has ended. A crucial factor affecting also this evaluation is that neither of the two interventions proposed an addendum to the logical framework, neither to the specific objectives nor to the objectively verifiable indicators, so the criteria of the specifications (ToR), the DTAs and the original financing agreement continued to be valid.

The detail of each of these evaluation criteria and their interrelationship will provide a more complete view of the process followed by the two interventions (see diagram below). The relevance criterion goes back to the adequacy of the design and its alignment with the real needs of the final beneficiaries, as well as the EU priority framework for the country and the government policy framework. On their side, the effectiveness together with the transversal axes and the added value of the EU, investigates the specific form of implementation of the activities of the two interventions and whether they have contributed towards the achievement of the specific objectives, encouraging the focus on gender, protection against climate change and defense of indigenous peoples in their actions, encouraging the integration of the member states of the EU on a constant basis. Finally, the sustainability criterion analyzes the probabilities of continuation of the effects of the interventions beyond their completion (see diagram).

Figure 3: Evaluation process and criteria



Relevance

The Relevance of the two interventions refers to the extent to which their objectives and strategies are oriented to meet the needs of the target population and comply with national and EU development strategies for the country. In this way, the relevance criterion refers to how much the two interventions have responded to the needs of the target groups, as well as the alignment with the political frameworks of the Government of Nicaragua and the EU.

In order to analyze the relevance of the two interventions, we address the following aspects in detail:

- alignment with the priorities and needs of the final beneficiaries
- coherence with the national and institutional policy framework
- alignment with the priorities of EU cooperation in the country

- adequacy of the design of the two interventions.

Firstly, coherence with the real needs and the objective context of the beneficiary groups, that is, that the intervention is oriented towards solving real needs for the targeting groups. The target group of ATI NITA is the set of government entities linked to the implementation of the MIP 2014-2020. Where actions with Civil Society and specific actions of the Delegation with both groups of recipients may be included⁹. For its part, the target group of communication and visibility services are broader and are oriented to the general public¹⁰, and specifically the segments: Young people from schools and universities, Opinion leaders and decision makers, Editors, journalists, bloggers and digital influencers, and Partners and beneficiaries of cooperation projects¹¹.

The two interventions are relevant as the actions are focused on capacity building for a more effective and efficient implementation of EU public policies and cooperation activities, ensuring that the prioritized sectors achieve results, impact and visibility¹². This need was considered important in lessons learned from previous programming, both 1998-2008¹³ and 2007-2013, indicating that further efforts were needed to improve institutional capacity for project management and monitoring. Likewise, a 2016 World Bank document highlights the need for actions to improve the performance and monitoring of public spending, “although progress has been made in ensuring a strong institutionalism and governance of fundamental interventions, the challenges remain”¹⁴.

None of the interventions have seen a fundamental change of beneficiary groups. Only the EU’s communication and visibility services in Nicaragua changed one of the four interest groups, adding Nicaraguan citizens and making women a more explicit target group¹⁵, but it cannot be considered a fundamental change. For its part, ATI NITA has not modified its stakeholders from design to implementation.

On the other hand, the ultimate goal of this kind of capacity-building projects is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of government interventions by increasing, modernizing and consolidating capacities in the design, formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects and programs. This through technical assistance to solve specific difficulties, systematic training, carrying out studies for decision-making, exchange of experiences and good practices, among others.

As a traditional capacity building project, ATI NITA sought to dynamize the implementation of interventions within the MIP through supporting the increase of capacities of government counterparts in the productive sector (agriculture and agro-industry), training for employment and climate change. The EU’s communication and visibility services in Nicaragua focused on implementing a systematic EU communication strategy in the country in order to position the EU as a relevant actor in Nicaragua’s development, communicate the benefits of its cooperation and its impact on people’s lives, and improve the EU’s position as a promoter of solidarity, prosperity, peace and human rights. Both interventions responded to structural needs, which to date remained unresolved, as the capacities of many government counterparts, rather than being strengthened, have been weakened, and the positioning of the EU as a development actor needs to be further strengthened (either by disinformation polarization or smear campaigns). This is because the needs remain present, and are even more urgent, and the interventions still represent an adequate response to the structural needs and rights of the target groups.

⁹ToR ATI NITA, January 15, 2016, pp.8.

¹⁰FA NITA Support Programme, pp.1/2015

¹¹Communication strategy 2018-2020, European Union – Nicaragua, 2017.

¹² FA, Annex 1, pp.3

¹³Nicaragua, Country Report, External Monitoring System of EC Development Assistance Programmes Service Contract – LOT 4- AL, July 2009.

¹⁴Nicaragua: Study of public social spending and its institutions. World Bank, October 2016.

¹⁵The audiences of interest in the 2018-2020 communication strategy consist of: Young people from schools and universities; opinion leaders and decision makers; editors, journalists, bloggers and digital influencers; and partners and beneficiaries of cooperation projects. On the other hand, the communication strategy reviewed and approved consists of Nicaraguan citizens, young people and women; journalists and influencers; opinion leaders; and strat. partners

It is important to emphasize that the temporary situation does not make the need for structural changes obvious, even more so it makes them more urgent. If the political-social crisis was to be solved tomorrow, it would be necessary to implement ATI NITA II and EU communication and visibility services in Nicaragua II.

- **Both projects are in line with the policy framework of the government.** The governmental political framework is formed by the NDP 2012-2016 (presents the country's overall policy priorities and objectives), Commitments of Good Governance 2017-2021 (which contains an extensive number of social targets), and National Human Development Agenda (2018-2021) as key and strategic documents. Let us remember that NDP's policies and targets are not linked to the National Budget, in the authorities' view, the 2012-2016 version of the NDP remains relevant as a general strategy with revised higher quantitative targets, and the government generally does commit to the 2030 Agenda and its implementation. The SDGs of open and efficient government, which are integrated into several SDGs, in which transparency, public participation and the existence of accountable institutions are instruments for the fulfillment of the goals, but especially SDG 16 aimed at the achievement of Peace, justice and solid institutions, and especially goal 16.6: to create effective and transparent institutions that are accountable at all levels¹⁶.

In addition, the 2012-2016 NDP establishes 12 strategic programs for national human development, four of which are taken up by the financing agreement as priority sectors: (7) participatory public management and direct democracy productive sector in rural areas (especially microenterprises and small farmers), (8) education policy for the common good and social equity of Nicaraguan families; (10) the productive sector prioritizing the family, community and cooperative economy, and sovereignty and food security, in a context of climate change; and (12) the protection of mother earth, adaptation to climate change and comprehensive disaster risk management¹⁷.

- **There is also a high relevance of the two interventions in taking into account the EU policy framework in the country and in the region.** Taking into account the key EU documents in the country (Country strategy paper and multiannual indicative programme 2014-2020 Nicaragua, the Annual action plan 2021 for Nicaragua and the MIP 2021-2027 Nicaragua), and during the life cycle of both interventions, the high alignment of the objectives of both with the sectors prioritized in the MIP and the CSP has not been modified.

In fact, the indicative allocation for Nicaragua (EUR 204 million) will be assigned to the following focal sectors: support to the productive sector, with a focus on rural areas; effective education for employment; and adaptation to climate change; with support measures included the two evaluated interventions¹⁸. In the case of the MIP 2021-2027, there is a shift in priority sectors, for example, education for employment is not maintained as a priority sector, while climate change and even economic growth are.¹⁹ However, support for cross-cutting sectors such as gender, human rights, indigenous peoples was already seen as important for the EU framework. In this respects, it can be inferred that EU support responds to the needs and challenges of the country.

- **Relevance and quality of the design of the interventions considers the adequacy of the project objectives to the real problems, needs and priorities of the target groups and beneficiaries** and whether the project design has been adapted to new needs and/or changes in its context, in terms of planning. This criterion includes the adequacy of the logical framework, mode of implementation, representativeness of actors involved, appropriation of actors in design and adequacy of hypotheses and risks.

¹⁶UN, The Sustainable Development Agenda. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/en/development-agenda/>

¹⁷National Human Development Plan 2012-2016, Government of Nicaragua, 2012.

¹⁸Nicaragua MIP 2014-2020, CE.

¹⁹Republic of Nicaragua, Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. European Commission, 2020.

First of all, neither of the two interventions under evaluation modified the logical framework, so it remained unchanged throughout their duration. The specific objectives remained unchanged, even at a time when dialogue with the government was practically nil and the impossibility of developing outcome 1 on strengthening government institutions was clear. Given this, the ATI and the UED actively reoriented the actions towards a segment of the final recipients (civil society), however only with specific and dispersed actions. Special effort was made to support the cross-cutting axes, especially the gender approach with the support of a medium-term specialist, which yielded results that we will analyze in detail later. At this point, the most important thing for the management of the project is no longer initial quality of the proposals but the scarce use that is identified of the logical frameworks as a dynamic tool. There are few occasions when implementing entities assume the need to translate partial or broader changes from the strategy into logical frameworks. However, it would be very beneficial for the entire management of the project cycle to carry out annual or periodic review exercises of the LFs, in coordination and dialogue with the UED itself.

The method of implementation by direct management of the EUD offered flexibility and adaptability to the two interventions in the face of the various challenges they encountered in their life cycles (political and social crisis, Covid-19 pandemic, polarized electoral cycle, 2 hurricanes, etc.). At any given event, a tacit crisis committee (made up of the project coordinator, the ATI/ITA and the head of the related thematic unit or head of cooperation) was quickly formed, made decisions and carried them out. Likewise, the direct management by the UED has ensured a control of the interventions, its activities and dynamics that have allowed it to respond in a conjunctural way to the new situation, responding to the greater sensitivity (of messages, actions and even communications) and the low profile adopted by the Delegation, to maintain the delicate balance in its situation in the country.

However, a cooperation project is not the ideal instrument to respond to short-term contingencies that demands rapid response. Continuously forcing the two interventions into this situation, and especially ATI NITA, has in some way led to the denaturation of the mission for which they were conceived, the establishment of a short-term crisis management concept (which needed the resources already), which had an impact on the quality of the services provided, as well as on the reduction of the mission days of the short-term experts (23% of the missions were less than 10 days long in ATI NITA). In addition, since there was no local representation of backstopping in the case of ATI NITA, this delayed the follow-up of the decisions taken, creating a bottleneck in the selection of short-term experts (which was officially pointed out by the delegation itself).

It is important in view of the recommendations for the new program, to contrast other possible ways of implementation, such as management by delegated cooperation, which would have implied more autonomy to the interventions for their development. To this end, it is important to investigate the development of statistical contracts managed by the IDB and the possibility of collecting information and interviewing those in charge.

An important element to consider concerns the design of interventions focused on the figure of a principal expert, who performs administrative and coordination functions of short-term missions, without the accompaniment of long-term experts specialized in thematic areas (for example, climate, productive sector or training). On the one hand, in ATI NITA the same long-term expert has been maintained throughout the implementation period, but this has led to an overload of work and functions (the functions of expert in gender have been added to the administrative and coordination functions). On the other hand, in the communication and visibility services the overload of work linked to the conditions of the context explains the turnover of three main experts²⁰. It is necessary to evaluate in view of the recommendations, other forms of deployment in the field, such as thematic experts who accompany the entire period or a large part of it (2-3 years). The project will be implemented in a way

²⁰Semi-Annual Progress Reports, Apple Tree.

that experts specialized in climate change, gender and the productive sector (agro-industrial if possible) coexist and work together, with the aim of giving a decisive impulse to the project's actions in the first 2 years of the project. Subsequently, the main coordinator and thematic expert would stay on to supervise the actions already designed and implemented by his or her colleagues.

Regarding the representativeness of the actors involved, as well as the appropriation of actors in design, they were greatly influenced by Nicaragua's political-social situation, which limits on several occasions a greater rapprochement (as usual) with civil society NGOs. This was aggravated by the isolation caused by the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 (with a greater number of telematic meetings, remote consulting, mobility difficulties and going to field work, etc.).

Finally, and in relation to the hypotheses and identified risks, it is instructive that these were very general and indefinite. None of them foresaw the probability of what happened in reality: the null dialogue with the government that prevents the implementation of the planned activities and forced the projects to reorient themselves towards other beneficiary sectors: civil society.

Based on all the above analysis, it is possible to indicate that the two interventions are highly relevant in terms of alignment with the priorities and needs of the final beneficiaries, coherence with the national and institutional policy framework and alignment with the priorities of EU cooperation in the country. However, this relevance is reduced by considering aspects of design quality, especially with regard to the use of the logical framework as a dynamic tool, the limited and indefinite starting assumptions and risk matrix, and the limited participation and ownership of intervention actors. Limited by external factors, certainly, but at last limited.

Taking into account the four aspects, it is possible to indicate that the overall relevance of the two interventions is adequate.

Effectiveness

This criterion analyses the contribution of the results of the two interventions to achieving the specific objective of the project. To address this criterion, two aspects will be analyzed: the results of the 2 interventions and their contribution to the achievement of the specific objective.

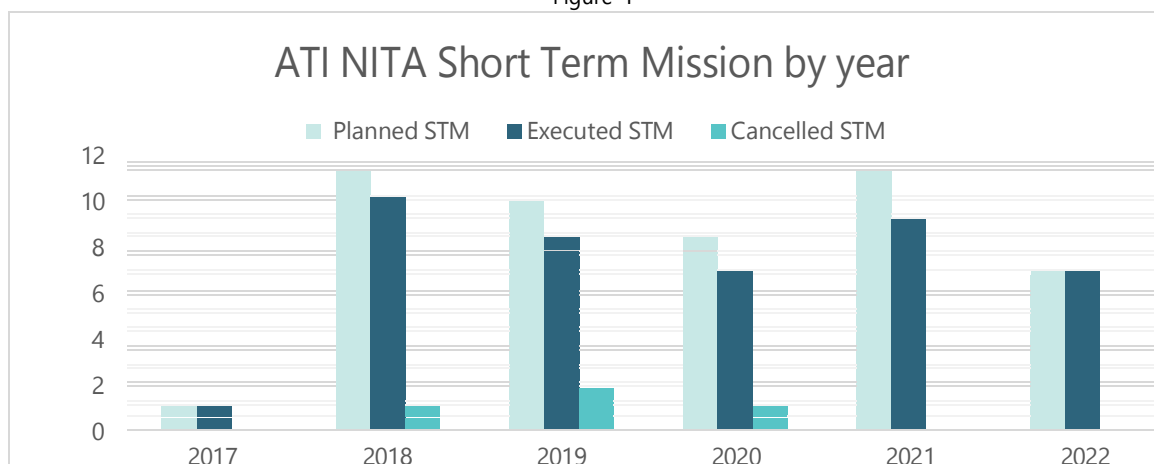
Results of ATI NITA. The intervention was aimed at providing technical assistance on demand to the beneficiary institutions, making available a long-term expert and at the same time TL of the same that remained unchanged from the beginning, 37 short-term missions and 5 medium-term missions (more than 6 months, which allowed the assignment of a support expert cat II in the areas of indigenous peoples (2), Gender (2) and poverty statistics (1))²¹. The short-term experts were mostly local experts (72 per cent) and were mainly oriented towards the development of studies, analyses, diagnoses, advice, formulation, seminars and workshops.

ATI NITA has encountered delays and difficulties in various activities implemented, as well as problems regarding the quality of the products and the quality of the experts hired. Due to the difficulties mentioned above (political-social crisis, the covid-19 pandemic and the electoral cycle), ATI NITA had to cancel six missions (12 percent of the total), mainly because its counterpart was governmental (MIFIC, ENATREL and MHCP), because the team could not be completed and because of difficulties in the quality of the experts selected or unforeseeable personal circumstances. The graph below clearly shows the effects of the political and social crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced ATI NITA to cancel two missions in 2019 and two missions

²¹Control of short-term missions ATI NITA, June 2022.

in 2021. The missions involved studies and formulation in the sectors of climate change, the productive sector, poverty statistics and indigenous peoples (see graphics below)²².

Figure 4



In relation to the destination of short-term expert assignments, they were gender-oriented (26% of total days/experts), with 12 missions especially in 2018, 2019 and 2020; and indigenous peoples (21% of total days/experts), with 3 missions (including medium-term ones as we have already mentioned), in 2020 and 2021. Support for national poverty statistics ranks third with 13% of the days/expert assigned, as well as monitoring the socio-economic data of COVID in 2020 and 2021, the fourth position (12%). It is followed by one-off assignments for the youth and child labor sectors in the country (10% total days/expert), climate change support (9% total days/expert) with 10 missions especially in 2018 and 2019, various analyses of the country's political and social situation (6% of the total days/expert) and the productive sector with 2% with just two missions (see table below).

Table 3: ATI NITA number of working days/expert assigned by prioritized sector

Year	Gender	Indigenous people	Poverty statistics	COVID-19 monitoring	Youth and infants	Climate change	Situation analysis	Productive sector
2017	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	12	0	0	0	0	22	22	45
2019	186	0	155	0	0	49	24	0
2020	193	169	0	116	0	0	60	4
2021	27	230	77	110	105	44	7	0
2022	43	0	16	0	88	56	8	0
Total	491	399	248	226	193	171	121	49
	26%	21%	13%	12%	10%	9%	6%	2%

The Communication and Visibility Services of the EU Cooperation in Nicaragua began a month before the crisis broke out in April 2018. This forced to rethink all the strategy that had been presented and that had been selected and finally, a modified version was presented that was approved by the UED in February 2019. This new strategy, based on an analysis and development of the 2017-2018 communication strategy²³, had as its objectives: to increase the EU's visibility, positioning it as a relevant actor in Nicaragua's development; to communicate the benefits of EU cooperation and its impact on people's lives; and to increase the EU's position as a promoter of solidarity, prosperity, peace and human rights.²⁴ Many of the first activities in 2018 had to be cancelled as participants' safety could not be ensured, for example the Workshop with journalists, or the EuroExpo 2018. However, for 2019, activities were developed in the eight axes of activities.

The following table presents a summary of the main results obtained, in the 8 axes of activities.

²²ATI NITA, Mission Control, June 2022.

²³Communication strategy of the European Union in Nicaragua, 2018.2020. Ecorys, Create! Communications, 2017.

²⁴Definitive communication and visibility strategy of the EU Delegation in Nicaragua. 1 February 2019, Apple tree.

Table 4: Main outputs of Comm&visibility services

ACTIVITY*	AUDIENCE	MAIN OUTPUTS
STORYTELLING & STORYDOING CAMPAIGN	General public	Campaign Together for Nicaragua (with 9534034 reproduction of digital content and ATL scope of 4865610, with content published in 40 media in Nicaragua and 64 international media), with 5 real stories of EU beneficiaries (1 per month). Mission ambassadors, Team Europe
"CUENTAME EUROPA"	Primary school students	Celebration of 3rd, 4th edition, Cuentame Europa Ocotal, 17 January 2022
"CONFLUENCIAS"	communication students/ social media influencers	Challenges of Contemporary Communication, October 2019.
"ERASMUS+ NICARAGUA CLUB"	Students, entrepreneurship, universities	Campaign to capture new leads through social media Meeting August 2020 2nd edition Europe Scholarship Fair (June 2022) Conversation/ Breakfast of the UED ambassador with new Erasmus (August 2022)
"JORNADAS EUROPEAS PARA EL DESARROLLO"	Young entrepreneurs	Protection of the oceans and biodiversity (June 2019), liaison with Brussels activities (June 2022)
"CENTROAMÉRICA CUENTA"	Opinion leaders and influencers, families and children's audiences	Celebration 6th edition 2019 Central America Account, in San Jose Costa Rica, May 2019
PERMANENT OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS	General public	Permanent activity on monthly media monitoring; generation of editorial content with an alternative/innovative approach, including the production of 14 success stories of cooperation in Nicaragua; and relational with UED spokespersons.
PROMOTING EU VALUES THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE	General public	International Women's Day (March 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022), International Human Rights Day (Dec 2020), Orange Campaign 2021, Video Ambassador opening 18th European Film Festival 2021, Cinema Forums, Documentary Patrol, June 2022
Initially 9 activities, it has been reduced UED to the crisis and covid-19 in: workshop with journalists, bloggers and digital influencers (act.3), euro expo (act 6), "centroamerica cuenta" (act.8). Source: own elaboration based on biannual technical progress reports.		

Those activities are: Storytelling and story making campaigns oriented to the general public; "tell me about Europe" to primary school students; "Confluencias/Confluences" aimed at communication students and influencers in social networks at the UCA; "Club Erasmus Nicaragua" oriented to students/entrepreneurs/universities; European days for development, aimed at young entrepreneurs; permanent monitoring office and generation of success stories for the EUD website; and promotion of EU values through art and culture oriented to the general public with celebrations of Human Rights Day, International Women's Day and Europe Day, among others²⁵. Apple Tree, in close coordination with the UED, has carried out activities in each of these axes since its launch, despite the fact that, as we mentioned, many were canceled because of risks for citizens' security derived from the political crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The second intervention had to cancel about more than 25 activities both because of security problems UED to the current political crisis and for health and health reasons in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Taking into account the ToR and especially their original specific objectives, the evaluation team found that the two interventions **faced great difficulties that limit the overall achievement of the expected outputs.**

In the first place, ATI NITA had as specific objectives the *strengthening of the capacities of ministries, decentralized entities and other institutions linked to the implementation of the CSP for Nicaragua, especially in relation to the three priority areas (productive sector, effective education for employment, adaptation to climate change); as well as the promotion of European cooperation to achieve maximum results and impact, integrating the gender approach and ensuring correct reporting based on objective and quantifiable data*²⁶. Of these two objectives, the first has practically remained on stand-by since the

²⁵Own elaboration based on Semi-annual Technical Progress Reports 1-8, Apple Tree.

²⁶TOR ATI NITA, January 15, 2016, UED Nicaragua, pp. 5.

beginning of 2018 (which gave content to the entire project), and in relation to the sectors, climate change has been supported much more than the productive and education sectors, which has been marginal (only 2.7% of the missions correspond to each of these two last sectors). The second objective is the one that has been most supported, in its gender aspect, both in terms of training, studies, curriculum, statistics and publications, but related to civil society organizations, not government entities.

Considering both aspects, it is possible to infer that, UED to the reduced input made in the areas of influence of the specific objectives, the expected products of ATI NITA are difficult to carry out.

With regard to the Communication and Visibility Services of the EU Cooperation in Nicaragua, the specific objectives relate to increasing the EU's visibility, positioning it as a relevant actor in Nicaragua's development; communicating the benefits of EU cooperation and its impact on people's lives; and increasing the European Union's position as a promoter of solidarity, prosperity, peace and human rights. In each of these axes, the intervention has developed several actions that have contributed to each of these ends, however the difficulties faced (first the political crisis, then Covid-19, then the electoral cycle), the high polarization resulting from the positioning of the EU in favor of human rights, dialogue and peace, as well as the decision of the UED to adopt a low-profile level, have reduced the realization of the expected products.

It is not surprising that the EU's greater visibility in the period evaluated in the country, results from its political positioning and not from its technical cooperation actions. From the outset, the EU was in favor of dialogue and negotiation between the parties, peace and respect for human rights, which earned it actions of repudiation by government agents, as well as disinformation campaigns and frontal attack. Despite this, the EU has achieved notoriety, not only at local and regional level, but also at international level. This could not be achieved even with the best communication strategy in the world. However, with regard to its cooperation actions, these have been reduced to a minimum due to the consequences of adverse factors (political crisis, Covid-19 and electoral cycle), thus modifying their effects and their inter-relationships with other initiatives. That is, reducing the content of the actions to be disseminated. All this was further limited by the EUD's decision to maintain a low political profile, which led to a reduction in the dissemination actions to be carried out and greater control of them by the delegation's staff.

In the other hand, taking into account the general objective consists of: *The program contributes to the national objective of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.* Despite the fact that no statistical information is available in this regard, since none of the two interventions designed and maintained data that would allow it (creating a baseline of comparison, or specific KPIs for the MDGs or for the fight against poverty), it is possible to indicate that the expected impact of the two interventions on the overall objective will be very limited.

Sustainability

The current national context is a major limitation for the sustainability of both projects. The following factors affect negatively the potential sustainability of the project.

The **institutional environment** poses a clear barrier to the sustainability of the services provided through both projects, but particularly ATI-NITA. It is characterized by the absence of a credible platform for political and technical dialogue, a socio-political context deteriorating even more and the continuation of tensioned relations with a number of cooperation partners (including the EU) The *raison d'être* of ATI-NITA was to provide on demand and continuous technical support and advice to Government institutions. That is paused for the time being and it is not likely to change, affecting directly the sustainability of its own purpose.

The difficulty to engage **technical expertise**, where a number of limiting factors have come into play: lack of local expertise available; limitations to work in the country, Nicaragua becoming less attractive, low fees, security aspects; very technical profiles requested (difficult to find), etc. That, in turn, has provoked an excessive reliance on the coordinator of ATI-NITA and her team to do many tasks that they were not supposed to.

The low prospects of **financial sustainability**. In ATI-NITA there may be some activities that concentrate on providing technical expertise on certain areas (e.g. generating statistics) that are more likely to meet financial opportunities provided by other donors or the Government in order to guarantee their sustainability over time. But for most areas, like those linked to work with LAs or NGOs will be less predictable and further support is needed. In that sense it is difficult to see how the sustainability of ATI-NITA does not depend on the willingness of the EU to continue financing it. The case of Communication and Visibility, due to the atypical nature of the project, is somewhat different. Although it has received both support and interest from different stakeholders and audiences, it is not really a project as such but rather part of the regular communication efforts of the EUD and, thus, it is not sustainable without the EUD maintaining it.

The existence of partnerships and alliances with **like-minded actors** to promote certain development goals is a very resilient form of combating challenges or the type of limiting factors that the projects have faced in Nicaragua as well as an important way to promote sustainability. During the interviews it has become clear that many of them face considerable limitations to keep working and, as a result, the capacity to deliver value through the project.

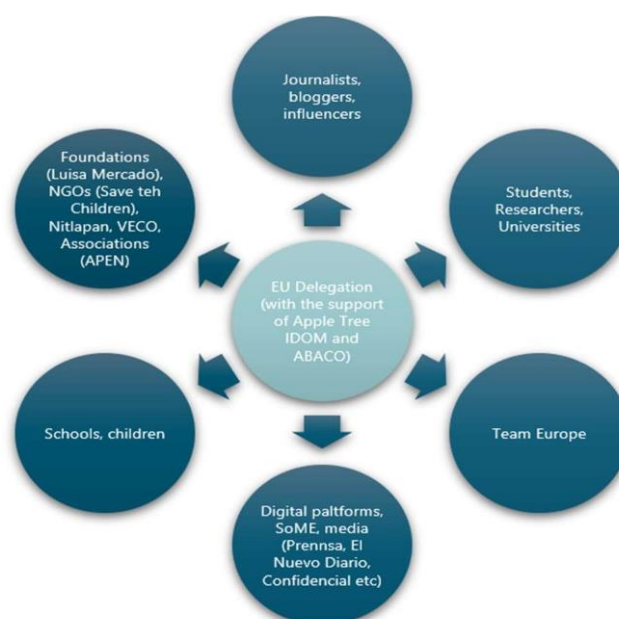
Sustainability also relies on the capacity to work with a **broad variety of actors** to promote agreed development goals. Figure 5 reflects key relationships developed in the context of Communication and Visibility with a wide range of relevant actors like national (La Prensa, Despacho 505), regional (Estrategias & Negocios) and international media (EFE, FORBES Centroamérica, El Economista), advertising departments (Claro for the communication of the Film Festival), schools and universities, cinemas, independent journalists, bloggers and digital influencers, Erasmus + beneficiaries, etc. One of the great challenges of the next years is how to sustain the relationships created, which should be part of the consolidation of the activities of both projects at time when many of those actors (media, schools, universities, LAs, CSOs, etc) are struggling to remain active.

Despite the importance of the factors just mentioned, the agreement reached between the Government and the EU to continue with the priorities of 2014/2021, in the form of 1) environment and climate change, and 2) sustainable and inclusive economic growth, sends a positive sign to look for aspects that could and should be sustained, as they remain relevant and somewhat aligned with the new priorities of the 2021/2027 programming period. In that context, it is important to look back for some strengths built during the last years.

Fig 5: Communication and Visibility partners

While the previous four aspects challenge the potential sustainability of both actions, there are also some positive assets developed during the last years. Sustainability scores much better in terms of the knowledge and social capital generated through the different activities of both projects, particularly on two areas:

- On one hand products that derive from the missions and remain highly relevant. The table below shows examples of those products and the knowledge that derives from them.



- The uptake of a number of lessons from the past period that result precisely from the difficulties faced. The constant monitoring of the evolution of the country have been integrated into the modus operandi of the projects and turned into a strength (resilience capacity) to be capitalised from, with new skills and many lessons learned.

Lastly, there is a better understanding about the state of knowledge and opinion about the EU and, as a result build a (revised) **communication strategy** to position the EU in the country. That, together with the monitoring of the socio-political context and the revised strategic lines of action²⁷ are great asset for the sustainability of the communication efforts.

One of them, important also for sustainability is the knowledge and social capital created through the different activities. The table presented above provides an example of **knowledge related products** through a number of activities, research and reports that cover all the priority areas of the 2014-2020 period. That

Table 5: Examples of knowledge based missions

knowledge remains part of the institutions and now the question is how to capitalize it.

Other relevant assets are the capacity to review of the socio-political context and adapt to a constant deterioration of the working possibilities, the development of a conflict sensitive approach to the implementation of the activities or a better understanding of better understanding about the state of knowledge and opinion about the EU and use better communication tools to position the EU in the country. These **intangible, unrecorded skills and lessons learned** are very valuable resources for the next years.

EU added value

Despite the increasingly difficult socio-political context, the EU added value has been reflected in the capacity of both projects to reach out to a broad spectrum of partners and implementation approaches to pursue EU cooperation in accordance with priorities for the programming period 2014-2020. The following shows that, systematizing examples of concrete actions and synergies.

- *Study on macroeconomic and fiscal perspectives*
- *National poverty statistics*
- *Knowledge transfer protected areas*
- *COVID Socioeconomic Monitoring*
- *Media monitoring*
- *Success stories of European cooperation in Nicaragua*
- *Climate change policy study*
- *Roadmap update*
- *Conflict analysis*
- *National poverty statistics 2021*
- *Indigenous people's situation analysis*
- *Strengthening of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants of Nicaragua (APIAN)*
- *Disaster risk analysis*
- *Conflict analysis*
- *Consumption aggregate poverty study*
- *Diagnosis of child labor*

- Synergies with other **regional and sub-regional EU initiatives** have taken place but perhaps at a lower rate than when the projects were conceptualized²⁸. Examples include the contribution to the Programme of Technical Assistance for the Strategic Planning of Central America (ATEPECA), the identification of possible avenues of collaboration within the framework of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEIs) with the Programme of Sustainable Livelihoods in the subregion (VIDHAS) and the VI Central America Edition of Contar a los Niños!, which took place in Costa Rica and promoted reading in the sub-region “as a fundamental tool that enables human beings to reflection, the ability to interpret their world and reshape it”.

- Synergies take place mostly within the country, where the vast majority of **activities supported by both projects have focused**. Examples from ATI-NITA are the implementation process of bilateral projects such as Local Alliances for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Coco river basin (ALLAC), Proyecto para la implementación del Segundo Programa de Apoyo a la estrategia del sector educación en Nicaragua (PROSEN II), Agua Managua, Programa Integral Sectorial de Agua y Saneamiento Humano de Nicaragua

²⁷ 1. give greater visibility to the European Union as a strategic partner, 2. emphasize the defense of human rights, democracy and peace: fundamental pillars of the EU; 3. reorient EU programs and activities to make them more relevant to Nicaraguans in particular young people and women in the current context; 4. have more presence in key media, closer and ongoing media relations; 5. continuously measure the impact/evolution of the communication program

²⁸ Annex II (Pliego de condiciones), illustrates a scenario in which ATI-NITA would interact more with both projects and partners at sub-regional level, for example through the coordination with the Regional Technical Assistance Center for Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (CAPTAC-DR).

(PISASH), and the formulation of other interventions such as Trade and sustainable development. Communication and Visibility has contributed with activities that are different in nature to more traditional development projects. Examples of those include Juntos por Nicaragua, Confluencias, Día Internacional de la Mujer, Cuéntame Europa. They have shown advantages for promoting European values and initiatives and offer an opportunity to work more flexibly with other EU members (e.g. Día Internacional de la Mujer).

Both projects have also exploited possibilities of **synergies with other donors**. Those are difficult to identify and evaluate, since most of them are linked to specific collaborations commissioned by the EUD. Those included, for example, the reactivation of the joint programming process and its update through a short-term evaluation mission by the OECD; the contribution to singular actions where different donors collaborate (PISASH, which combines funds from the EU and AECID with loans from the CABEL, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the IDB and funds from the Government of Nicaragua); the ToRs made for the provision of technical assistance from the IDB to the Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo (INIDE), related to the generation of national gender indicators; and the steps taken to support the Donor Coordination Mechanism, in particular giving continuity to the sectoral table on gender led by the Inter-agency Gender Commission (CIG).

- **Cooperation with other EU actors** have taken place in different forms.
 - a) Cooperation with **individual EU countries or bilateral agencies**. Both the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo (AECID) and the German Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) have participated in different forms like, for example in the project AL-LACC (Local Alliances for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Coco river basin).
 - b) As part of the **Team Europe** approach there are examples, linked to Objective A2.3 (Supporting the implementation of joint programming) though different types of interventions.
 - ✓ Missions of EU Ambassadors have taken place with different objectives. For example, the one to San Carlos was meant to learn about the interventions in the area and the development of further cooperation and potential complementarities. The visits to the Caribbean Coast (Bluefields and Bilwi) monitored a project for the conservation of coastal ecosystems and carried out an activity to promote a school reading at Laguna de Perlas. As a result of this mission, a guide was generated for the organization and evaluation of this type of high-level missions.
 - ✓ In terms of programming inputs, the two missions COVID-19 socioeconomic analysis and conflict analysis, were completed with the contributions of the Coordinator to the proposals of Team Europe initiatives and preparation of recommendations to the geographical and thematic programming proposals.
 - ✓ In terms of communication and visibility, the new approach to communication has contributed to give the EU both more and a different type of visibility, being more present (e.g. EU Head of Delegation participating in activities in Madriz, Nueva Segovia, Bilwi; conversation with Erasmus, Ciclo Cine Europeo, etc), going beyond the traditional collection of different cooperation projects. Cultural and artistic activities to promote European values, like documentaries or Cuéntame Europa, campaigns on storydoing about EU projects to be communicated and storytelling about what does EU cooperation do in Nicaragua or the promotion of initiatives such as Erasmus + have taken place. The International Women's Day has been a very good example of that, where the European Union and the embassies of Germany, Spain, France and Italy exemplified their support a campaign in favor of gender equality and a world without violence against women and girls.

Table 6: Joint programming examples ATI-NITA

Preparation of Risk Assessment proposal	Country Risk Assessment agreed with EEMM
Report with guidelines for the organization of Heads of Mission (HOM)	1 manual for organization and evaluation of missions
Accompaniment to the mission of EU Ambassadors to San Carlos	2 Ambassadors follow-up meetings
Accompaniment to the mission of EU Ambassadors Caribbean Coast Bluefields	3 EEMM follow-up meetings
2 follow-up meetings for the joint programming process	6 events & consultations with civil society
Accompaniment to the mission of EU Ambassadors Caribbean Coast Bilwi	1 Meeting with HOMs on gender in Nicaragua
Meeting with HOMs to analyze the gender profile	Accompaniment the implementation process of Joint Programming

The previous exemplifies how searching for synergies and increasing cooperation among EU countries and projects have taken place. Now, the great challenge for the next phase is to reconcile the very degraded political context with what is expected from the EU as a result of the new/more ambitious/assertive approach of the Geopolitical Commission, the spirit and mandate of Team Europe or the recently adopted Global Gateway. Even more, how to translate that in practice through projects like ATI-NITA and Communication and Visibility, "to make engagement with partners more strategic and responsive, building ever stronger and mutually beneficial partnerships based on shared interests"

Cross-cutting issues

Based on the evidence collected by the evaluation team, the legacy of both projects in crosscutting issues is strong. The following aspects derive from the work of both projects during the last years and, in the context of this evaluation, have been identified as strong assets to focus on for the continuity of EU cooperation in the country.

1. Many activities through both interventions have address **inequality issues** in many different forms. Table 7 shows a list of short-term missions, events and other activities targeting directly aspects related to inequality aspects, sometimes in combination with communication activities portraying the work done by the EU in the country. One area where particular attention has been placed is the **relation with CSOs and marginalized communities**. Even when the enabling environment for CSOs began to deteriorate, the level of engagement with them and marginalized communities have continued and activities have been kept, trying to reach out, empower, represent, and defend increasingly vulnerable groups.

Extensive work has also been done on the implementation processes through civil society organizations, showing a continuous support for CSOs in the country, particularly at a time when the enabling environment has worsened enormously. Examples of that support are showcased in Crosscutting issues. The table bellow also proves another of the strong assets of the projects, their awareness and integration of principles of **rights-based approach**, clearly strengthening the principle of "leaving no one behind". Despite these examples not having been presented and systemized throughout the progress reports, rights-based approach is a very positive element in both contracts. Even in the EU Communication and Visibility contract, whose nature may not be that familiar with development related concepts and strategies, rights-based issues have been made highly visible across its action.. In short, both have provided a clear framework where crosscutting issues, such as engagement with civil society and gender mainstreaming (as clearly

Table 7: Activities Inequality
National poverty statistics
Transfer of knowledge protected areas
COVID Socioeconomic Monitoring
Conflict analysis
National poverty statistics 2021
PIA advice
Together for Nicaragua
Human Rights Day
Women's Day
Strengthening of the APIAN
Diagnosis of child labor
Disaster risk analysis
Conflict analysis
Aggregate consumption poverty study

described in the previous section), have been thoroughly integrated in the different activities, together with the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.

2. During the period of implementation and despite the setbacks, considerable progress has taken place in regards to gender support, particularly in terms of capacity building, seeking to work more with EUD staff, with civil society partners and being able to produce a series of products, like studies, assessments, etc to allow the EUD to integrate gender approaches into their own routines.

According to different interviews (e.g. EUD, external experts, etc), the process of generating conditions to make progress in gender has worked well, including a change of perspective, more commitment and more clarity, but especially a needed **cultural change** to place more emphasis on gender and incorporating a more transformative vision with practical tools (e.g., "it has managed to get us used to having a gender analysis that helps us design projects better"). That has led to a gradual interest and improvement of Gender products. It has provided the basis for building the country programme, a good and collective learning process for the Delegation and the establishment of new capacities after an institutional-internal diagnosis. During those conversations it was also mentioned that the remaining challenges are associated with the institutionalization of gender in the long term and the right identification of the needs in terms of future technical assistance.

Table 8: Examples of actions supporting CSOs

- Meeting at the EU Ambassador's residence with the representatives of the main international civil society organizations to accompany the process of implementation of the cooperation strategy of the DUE in Nicaragua.
- Informative meetings with CSOs for updating the roadmap and designing a follow-up mechanism for working in the country.
- Catalogue of services of the EU to Nicaraguan Civil Society in the framework of the crisis.
- Workshops with NGOs to analyze the complementarity of work strategies.
- Mission to the marginalized communities of Madriz and Nueva Segovia
- Misión Bilwi: niñez y juventud caribeña
- Support for the generation of information on civil society in Nicaragua.
- Cooperation with the APIAN in the preparation of a financing proposal to be presented to the Fondo de Apoyo para la Sociedad Civil (FASOC)
- A new mission was launched to create a youth dialogue platform for EU cooperation policy in Nicaragua.
- Participation in the process of formation of the network of human rights indigenous and Afro-descendant women of Mesoamerica.

Cases studies

The case studies constitute one of the evidence streams that contribute to the systematic analysis of this evaluation. The two cross cutting objectives to be covered by case studies were selected based on the major contributions of the two interventions.

As we have analyzed in the previous section, the most frequent and most contributing thematic axes of the two interventions are: gender approach and climate change.

Gender

Both projects have been vocal in supporting **gender**. The case of ATI-NITA excels in terms of gender support. The large number of activities, covering so many aspects that range from diagnosis to the entire cycle of project and gender mainstreaming, considering the interventions carried out through various instruments to the different actors of the public sector and CSOs, as well as those executed centrally by the Delegation itself. It has widely shared knowledge through many different successful products to the point of CLIP being recognized as a best practice. Now the question is how that knowledge receives the attention and the means to be institutionalized and projected to the future across all activities. Table below in findings about cross cutting issues depicts those in a long list of actions, their varied nature and outreach capacity to prove how gender related efforts are some of the strongest assets left by both interventions.

It is therefore necessary to implement actions for the accumulation of social capital in order not to lose what has been achieved so far, including institutional marketing activities, both within the organizations involved and outside, with other NGOs of the civil society in the country.

Considerable progress has taken place in the field of gender, with both valuable products and capacity installed. It has managed to foster a change in culture in terms of the approach to gender and, at the same time, generated increasing interest. However, that does not mean that dependence on technical assistance is greatly reduced. Capacity has been created but not necessarily specialization. There is further need to operationalize gender instruments, so there is consistency between expectations and resources.

Table 10: A summary of gender activities and products

1. Gender initiative to strengthen and enhance the cross-cutting strategy of the EU in the framework of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP).
2. Monitoring of the GAPI follow-up to the implementation of the 2017 Gender Action Plan.
3. A seminar held for the deconstruction of gender stereotypes for the EUD.
4. A proposal to continue with the process of strengthening the capacities of the EUD personnel regarding the mainstreaming of gender and other cross-cutting issues.
5. Assistance to the gender officer of the EUD to the Interagency Gender Commission to evaluate the possibility of supporting gender related activities through NITA.
6. Short-term mission of a gender expert to provide specialized recommendations to the formulation of the drinking water project PISASH in its phase II, both general to the design of the project and with regard to gender mainstreaming.
7. Joint Programming and Gender Analysis undertaken to strengthen capabilities to the staff of the Delegation.
8. Support for a correct incorporation of the gender approach in the EU's operation in Nicaragua, in line with the Gender Action Plan
9. Support for the implementation of the GAP gender action plan: as a result of the dissemination of the GAP 2017 results report, a summary of this was made focusing on Central American, and results were incorporated to the specific case of Nicaragua.
10. Analysis report on the challenges of implementation and monitoring of the GAP in Nicaragua.
11. A brief report with statistical data on the gender situation in the country "Gender Profile".
12. Support for the mainstreaming of the gender approach, including the programming of activities based on the preparation of a proposal that addressed the different areas of work.
13. Workshop on gender analysis and indicators, attended by EUD and MS staff.
14. Progress in the work of systematizing the "Gender Initiative", consolidating the results of the San Pancho border integration program.
15. Analysis on the treatment of the gender approach in the poverty country survey carried out by FIDEG, generating inputs to consider in future editions.
16. The content of the Country Gender Profile was completed, reviewed and commented by the EUD team.
17. The gender approach mainstreaming mission completed in the border integration, which provides a mainstreaming plan.
18. Recommendations were made regarding the formulation of the Climate Change program ALLACC, on which the realization of a mainstreaming mission is proposed for the next period.
19. Preparation of a supporting document for the use of non-sexist language and its presentation to the entire EUD team.
20. Review of sex education and teen pregnancy prevention materials from a Civil Society project.
21. A presentation was made to Heads of Mission of the EU for Nicaragua of the main results of the Country Gender Profile.
22. Campaign "Pintemos un mundo sin violencia hacia la mujer".
23. Two short-term missions carried out; one for the study of the hidden gender curriculum in education and the other for the diagnosis and definition of priorities in the field of GBV.
24. Review of the gender plan of the PROSEN program.
25. Construction of CLIP Nicaragua, gender implementation plan derived from the GAP III mandate, including various consultations and presentations both to European NGOs and to the UN agency system.
26. Conversation with young people on gender equality, obtaining additional inputs for the design of the document.
27. Participation in two talks-cinema forums on masculinities around the film "Her job".
28. The celebration of the International Women's Day, March 8, 2019
29. Campaign Mujeres Fuertes.
30. The CLIP document was generated for the implementation in Nicaragua of GAP III
31. A first follow-up proposal was generated for CLIP Nicaragua and a presentation was carried out together with the gender focal point to all EUD personnel.
32. A presentation was also made to the new Ambassador, in a briefing format on the situation of gender in the country.
33. A ToR proposal was prepared for the generation of country indicators for monitoring the SDGs, to be contracted by the IDB.
34. Participation in two talks-cinema forums on masculinities around the film "Her job".
35. The celebration of the International Women's Day, March 8, 2019.

Climate change

As mentioned earlier in this document, Climate Change has been a priority for the European Union in Nicaragua during the last planning period (2014-2020) and was supposed to have a considerable level of protagonism in the implementation of, particularly, ATI-NITA. While efforts have taken place, the activities have been less frequent, more diverse and less prone to a continuous demand and interest (as for example gender has been) than initially expected.

There have been examples of that, to which ATI-NITA has contributed. For example, in the project ALLAC, which aimed at improving access to drinking water and sanitation, protect water recharge areas through conservation and restoration of forest areas, in addition to strengthening the capacities of institutions and communities. For example, ALLAC guaranteed drinking water to 180 families living in an area of 140 hectares in the municipality of Las Sabanas, in the border with Honduras.

Similarly, PISASH was designed in 2012 in response to the commitment made in the National Plan for Human Development, and seek to promote the achievement of the national goals established for the sector. It contemplates the improvement and expansion of drinking water, sanitary sewage and wastewater treatment services in urban and rural areas; as well as the increase in institutional capacities for operation and maintenance, management, financial sustainability and comprehensive management of water resources. PISASH is an archetypical action where a project like ATI-NITA would have made a more continuous contribution if a normalized dialogue with the Government had been possible. A similar case occurs with Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), which aimed to increase the use of renewable energy, to create more detailed policies for energy efficiency in various sectors of the economy, and promote unrestricted access to energy.

All those initiatives rest at the intersection of climate change, sustainable development and rural development and often demand large resources, pooling different donor efforts, considerable coordination and interlocution from the side of different Government levels, the participation of financial institutions and the private sector, etc. While it could be argued that the last years have not been ideal for these type of projects in Nicaragua, it is important to question how could ATI-NITA contribute more effectively to current needs in this field in the years to come.

Looking ahead, an important contribution has been the climate change policy analysis, with proposals for the next years. This analysis includes advances and projections of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to climate change mitigation, and an identification of support areas for the adaptation and mitigation of climate change. First, it describes the main effects of climate change in Nicaragua, the scenarios foreseen for the future and an estimate of the economic losses that climate change causes to families and the Nicaraguan state. Secondly, it examines the legal, institutional and political framework of Nicaragua related to the issue of climate change and a brief description of the content of the National Climate Change Policy (PNCC) and the NDC is made. Afterwards an analysis of the PNCC and the NDC is carried out, linking alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, the Regional Climate Change Strategy (ERCC) and with the cooperation programs of the European Union (EU). This is followed by an analysis of the contents of the PNCC and the NDC, considering the consistency of the available data; as well as the relevance, limitations and gaps of its objectives and strategic guidelines of the national strategy. Lastly, a series of lines of action are identified and prioritized to contribute to the goals of the PNCC. For each line of action, a series of recommendations are made, including the elements that are considered important to take into account in the formulation and execution of eventual projects. Both in the prioritization criteria and in the identification of the specific recommendations, the gender and human rights approaches have been incorporated.

This study does not solve the problem of lack of political dialogue with the Government of Nicaragua but offers a very useful guidance towards the next phase of ATI-NITA in Nicaragua, particularly as a reference for the next key areas in which practical contributions could be made.

Overall assessment

After analyzing the above criteria individually, a global and general evaluation of the two interventions is necessary. To this end, we present below a summary table with the criteria analyzed together with their assessment:

Overall assessment		
#	Criteria	Assessment
1	Relevance	adequate
2	Effectiveness	medium
3	EU Added value	adequate
4	Cross-cutting issues	high
5	Sustainability	medium

Source: previous criteria analyzed

As can be seen from all the analysis done above, criterion by criterion, the strengths of the two interventions are related to its high approach to cross-cutting issues and the suitable relevance and EU added value. **Relevance** is high in relation to the degree of alignment with the real needs of the beneficiary groups, alignment with the national policy framework and congruence with the EU policy framework. However, the design, especially in the logical framework, were not modified during the life cycle of the two interventions, and the representativeness of the actors involved is limited. In addition, although efforts were made to interact with other actors, NGOs, donors, and projects within and at the regional level, the situation caused by the political and social crisis and the effects of the covid-19 pandemic limited the EU's added value.

The **effectiveness** of the two interventions was limited by their limited contribution to the program's specific and official objectives, which remained unchanged throughout the life cycle of the interventions. Finally, **sustainability** is compromised by the country's difficult political situation, which points to the need to modify the focus and orientation of future interventions.

In fact ATI-NITA and Communication and Visibility were conceived at the beginning of the 2014-2020 programming period. Despite recurrent challenges faced by Nicaragua, such as poverty and inequality, insecurity and the high vulnerability to natural disasters, **EU cooperation was at the time being conducted through a stable dialogue with the Government and the institutions of the country.** That is implicit in the fact that ATI-NITA was designed as the instrument to support the planning and programming processes of the Government of Nicaragua and the projects financed by the EU through technical assistance for the sectors prioritized in the Multiannual Indicative Program (MIP) (just mentioned), as well as in the promotion of gender equality as a transversal axis to the three priority areas. In short, it was supposed to advance the gradual improvement of public policies and strengthening the capacities from both the EU and other organisations, including Ministries such as, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. In parallel, the process was supposed to benefit from a revamped communication approach, encompassing both the role and the actions of the EU in Nicaragua, and carried out through the project Communication and Visibility.

Unfortunately, **the change of political conditions in the country and the ensuing crisis deeply affected the dialogue with the Government and, with it, the capacity to implement EU cooperation as initially planned.** The consolidation of an increasingly authoritarian leadership has fostered a climate in which threats to basic freedoms, a worsening enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs), increasing risks to human security, censorship and political persecution have become more present. Those challenges, which have conditioned the context during these last years, are essential to understand the implementation, achievements and potential sustainability of both interventions as well as the challenges faced by European cooperation in the years to come.

Immediately after the 2018 crisis, ATI-NITA changed into a different project. That has taken place at three levels.

- **At the level of objectives**, it focused on what is viable. ATI-NITA was conceived as an instrument to support the planning and programming of the GoN. A key part of that, to provide a continuous technical support and advice to Government institutions is paused for the time being, it is not likely to change and remains a big question mark for the future.
- **At the level of process**, what seems to characterize the approach, since 2018, is reaction and risk management rather than the possibility to return to a more normalized cooperation with the Government.
- **At the level of management**, the original set up, where the EU Delegation, accompanied by the Comité de Dirección and the Comité Técnico, would gradually vertebrate the action, reaching out to a large variety of actors, depending on the agreed sectors and providing orientation and support for any particular upcoming needs. Without their guidance and participation, the project has gradually depended on the capacity of the team leader, her team and the cooperation with the EUD to tackle considerable problems in terms of finding expertise, dealing with deadlines, integrating risks analysis, etc.

In that context flexibility and the capacity to improvise solutions in execution has been vital, particularly to respond to short term requests and hardened contextual circumstances. Often there has been a high demand for specific products (such as short-term missions) with very little time to prepare.

Both projects were supposed to reach out and engage with a large number of actors, including Ministries, relevant national technical agencies, national statistical offices, private sector associations, NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSOs), academia, research centers, think tanks, local authorities, international donors, etc. That approach was ambitious, but not unrealistic. In fact, it matched well the objectives of both projects and the overall dynamics of cooperation with the country at the time of design.

The first year of implementation (2017-2018) exemplifies what would have been ATI-NITA in normal circumstances. Back then, as depicted in the following table, meetings involved the EUD, Government representatives (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, etc), CSOs and other donors. That environment with a broad variety of stakeholders presumed an active interest and participation, a rich dialogue and continuous engagement and coordination to achieve agreed results.

Table 9: Activities and products objective 1 (2017-2018)

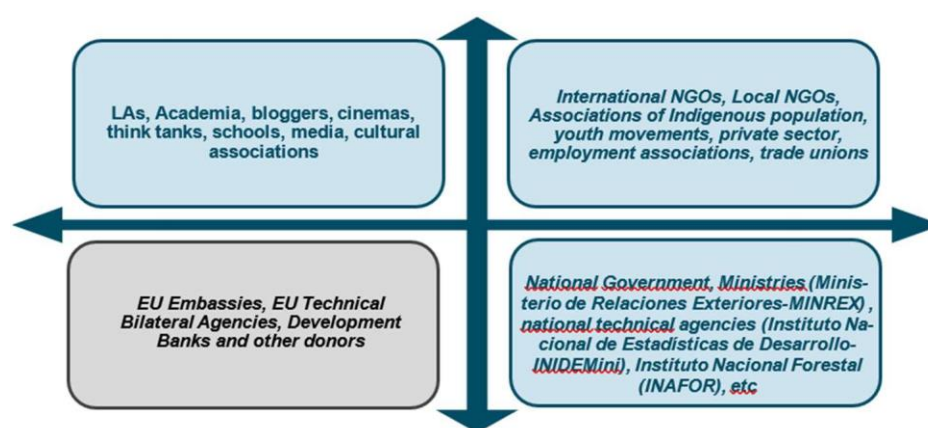
<p>ADVICE TO THE GON REGARDING THE FORMULATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING OF PUBLIC POLICIES</p> <p><i>(Mainly in the sectors of the MIP 2014-2020)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report with recommendations for the formulation of the Ministry of Development, Industry and Commerce (MIFIC) - Trade Project - Reports with formulation recommendations MIFIC (TRADE) - Recommendations for the formulation of the Nicaraguan Company of Sanitary Aqueducts and Sewers (ENACAL) PISASH Project - Recommendations to the formulation Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) and National Forestry Institute (INAFOR) ALLACC Project - Recommendations to the formulation Center for Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (CAPTAC-DR) - Recommendations to the country programming process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Report of recommendations for the formulation of the Trade project - Recommendations to the DTAs; Report of recommendations to the MPP-ALLACC - 2 Reports with recommendations for the formulation (TRADE-PISASH) - AD CAPTAC-DR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports for management recommendations MARENA-INAFOR (ALLACC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief report with management recommendations for starting up PP; 1 ToR model AT GIZ -ALLACC - 1 report with management recommendations PP MARENA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short-term mission to the National Institute of Development Information (INIDE) o Short-term mission to MARENA-INAFOR POG (ALLACC) o Short-term mission PP MARENA-INAFOR PP (ALLACC) - SE4all formulation support short-term mission, SE4all legal report mission, SE4all identification mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Strategy Population and Housing Census (CEPOV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ALLACC Project planning workshop o PP MARENA o PP INAFOR o AD SE4all and complementary o Electrification legal report - Report on renewable and productive energies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice for the implementation of the ALLACC program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PP MARENA • PP INAFOR

	- 4 trainings MARENA-INAFOR PP-PRAG	PRAG, 2 workshops on administrative procedures for PP management)
--	-------------------------------------	---

Source: Progress Report ATI-NITA

That, unfortunately, changed consistently after the 2018 political crisis. The situation forced several cancellations, the revision of the strategy of both projects and a more inward-looking attitude, mirroring the changing socio/political context in the country. Gradually other limitations affecting the normal implementation of the projects arouse, such as the increasing difficulties to find the required expertise, and the impact of the COVID pandemic naturally added even more constrains to the normal implementation of the projects. Ultimately, all those factors have increased the limitations in the capacity to vertebrate EU cooperation with multiple actors, as initially planned in both project strategies. The graph below includes in blue all those actors that were part of the space of work of both projects at the beginning and how now, either because of the increasing difficulties in their capacity to work or because of the lack of dialogue, a serious challenge exists to continue working together.

Figure 6



Conclusions and recommendations

Lessons learnt

- To improve the quality of the design, it is necessary to assume and promote the use of the logical framework as a dynamic tool. At this point, the most important thing for the management of the specific intervention is no longer the initial quality of the proposals but the scarce use that is identified of the logical frameworks as a dynamic tool. There are few occasions when implementing entities assume the need to translate partial or broader changes from the strategy into logical frameworks. However, it would be very beneficial for the entire management of the project cycle to carry out annual or periodic review exercises of the LFs, in coordination and dialogue with the UED itself, in order to adjust the entire intervention logic to the challenges faced..
- It is important for the new program, to contrast other possible ways of implementation, such as management by delegated cooperation, which would have implied more autonomy to the interventions for their development. To this end, it is important to investigate best practices as well as the development of statistical contracts managed by the IDB and the possibility of collecting information and interviewing those in charge.
- The approach to Communication and Visibility has changed. It is not a complementary activity linked to EU projects but rather a central part of how the EU portrays itself; what it stands for, the role it plays in the world, in the country and through which activities. This is an on-going learning process into a more professionalized approach towards communication. The political crisis in Nicaragua has affected the capacity to implement activities and communicate. In this sense, a good asset developed by the project has been the review of the evolution of the political and socio-economic context of the

country, accompanied by a monitoring of media outlets and, as a result, how to place activities and messages in the most appropriate way.

- An important effort has been undertaken in terms of having a better understanding of a rich and diverse map of actors to partner with across the territory, develop a more continuous relationship and, as a result, build a (revised) strategy to position the EU in the country. The situation with some of the stakeholders involved (universities, LAs, CSOs) has worsened and that trend is likely to continue, affecting future activities (new cancellations) and/or not being able to reach certain audiences. This requires the project to revisit the viability of activities, partners and means.
- The political context, the increasing censorship and the pressure on some of the actors involved in the activities have provoked the need to adapt to overcome obstacles and, at the same time, learn about the impact of the activities. Three essential insights derived from it are: 1) the resilience of the EUD despite serious crises; 2) the importance of communication based on facts and participation (e.g. ambassadors who go to the field or are seen in events related to European values); 3) activities accompanied by consistent messages regardless of the channels used.
- The impact of many communication activities has been recorded well as measured in targeted public, clippings, headlines, published content, followers, etc. However, that does not say a lot in term of the progress of the communication efforts. In the future it would be useful to have a better understanding of the evolution of results of different activities accompanied by written and systematized information about the effectiveness of different investments as well as the performance of different communication channels and instruments.

Conclusions

- Both ATI/NITA and Communication and Visibility were designed as part of the complementary support measures for the Cooperation Strategy of the European Union in Nicaragua for the period 2014-2020, to assist in actions covering the productive sector, with a focus on rural areas; effective education for employment, and adaptation to climate change. The change of political conditions in Nicaragua and the resulting crisis undermined the dialogue with the Government and, with it, the capacity to implement EU cooperation as initially planned. The consolidation of an increasingly authoritarian leadership has fostered a very hostile climate for the normal implementation of the projects. That has become the critical factor to understand the implementation, achievements and potential sustainability of both interventions, which has affected both the ATI NITA (eliminating in practice the counterpart and what that means for a capacity building project), as well as the second intervention (which did not even begin to apply the previously approved communication strategy), being forced at the outset to modify and update the EU communication strategy in Nicaragua.
- However, a cooperation project is not the ideal instrument to respond to short-term contingencies that demands rapid response. Continuously forcing the two interventions into this situation, and especially ATI NITA, has in some way led to the denaturation of the mission for which they were conceived, the establishment of a short-term crisis management concept (which needed the resources already), which had an impact on the quality of the services provided, as well as on the reduction of the mission days of the short-term experts.
- Despite the difficulties, the cooperation with other actors has remained and become a strong asset of both projects. On one hand, the EU has continued to show a clear commitment to support civil society and disadvantaged communities. On the other, linkages have been established and the continuous relation with a wide range of relevant actors, from media, schools and universities to individuals and Erasmus+ beneficiaries.
- The logical framework is fundamental for the strategic management of a cooperation intervention, and it is logical that it evolves together with the project. However, **neither of the two interventions**

made an addendum to modify the logical framework, keeping the original, despite the fact that for reasons known to all, the government counterpart did not cooperate in the aforementioned activities, leaving the main activity meaningless in the case of ATI NITA, and without a strategic partner, in the case of the EU's communication and visibility services in Nicaragua. In addition, since there has been no change in the logical framework or in the specific objectives, the evaluation of the criteria is made on the basis of the original components, which have not even been executed, which reduces effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and of course the sustainability to the two interventions.

- In relation to the hypotheses and identified risks from the proposal of the two evaluated interventions, it is instructive that these were very general and indefinite. None of them foresaw the probability of what happened in reality: the null dialogue with the government that prevents the implementation of the planned activities and forced the projects to reorient themselves towards other beneficiary sectors: civil society
- The political crisis and its consequences have also challenged the potential sustainability through a number of ways: the institutional environment, without a normalized dialogue with the Government, undermines the main objective of ATI-NITA; the increasing censorship and threats to basic freedoms is conditioning the capacity of both projects to work with a certain degree of normality with many of the stakeholders involved (media, independent journalists, universities, CSOs, LAs, etc), which are facing increasing scrutiny and pressure from the Government; the capacity to provide the technical expertise has also encountered problems. Lack of experts, low quality of some of the products and the difficulty to work in Nicaragua are some of the factors that contribute to the delivery of the better capacity building services; lastly, in terms of financial sustainability, none of the two projects are sustainable without additional funding from the EU.
- While the potential sustainability faces those challenges, there are a number of built-in assets from this phase that should be remembered in the next one: first, sustainability scores much better in terms of the knowledge and social capital generated through the different activities of both projects, including a more conflict sensitive approach to design and implement activities; secondly, there have been remarkable progress in the field of gender; thirdly, both interventions have kept up the efforts targeting different forms inequality issues through a considerable number of activities that provide a good picture about the evolving situation of the country; fourth, both have shown a solid support to a rights-based approach where crosscutting issues have been thoroughly integrated in the different activities, together with the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination; lastly, there is a better understanding about the state of knowledge and opinion about the EU as well as about how to position the EU in the country in terms of communication.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed looking at a scenario where the socio-political situation in Nicaragua does not witness major improvements, dialogue with the Government remains stuck and the working conditions for the partners of both projects keep on deteriorating. It is a scenario where limitations prevail and, as a result, any positive impact will strongly depend on the capacity to integrate the lessons learned during the last period and, together with it, new tools and techniques to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of European cooperation. The following recommendations go in that direction. They are focused on tools, which complement each other, learn from the limitations faced during the last years and propose practical solutions. They encourage collective learning and planning, and a systemic approach to cooperation avoiding a collection of piecemeal projects and initiatives and wiring properly synergies among EU countries and projects. They ultimately try to help reconcile the damaged political context in Nicaragua with the more transformative ambitions of EU cooperation.

- **A Stakeholder mapping** is an important management tool to keep track of a varied array of participating actors and their expectations. Unfortunately, in development cooperation mappings are mostly used in the form of one-shot identification of actors instead of the monitoring of a dynamic relation/partnership to achieve an agreed goal. Both interventions are archetypical of that as they involve a broad universe of stakeholders. Bearing in mind the difficulties and changes occurred during the last years, which has naturally led to change in attitudes and increased limiting factor of different nature (e.g. the worsening

enabling environment for many non-state actors) it would be highly recommendable to incorporate a stakeholder mapping at the management level of the project, particularly to monitor the following aspects: review changes in participation since the beginning of the project and whether that is likely to continue throughout the course of the project; scrutinize stakeholders to assess how relevant they are to the project and what are their contribution to the objectives proposed, how they are willing to engage or how much participation in the project have they had; rank stakeholders on the basis of their engagement and the dynamics of cooperation over the course of the project. That mapping is very effective in combination with **knowledge management tools**. These are critical to get “under the skin” of the progress of development interventions and make permanent improvements, if possible together with partners and other relevant actors.

- A **risk matrix** (or assessment) is often ignored as an extremely valuable management tool. This is particularly useful now for the EU and its partners, especially bearing in mind that it has already developed a conflict sensitive approach. Is that systematized in terms of lessons learned and shared with partners? There are many issues that can be better resolved at the level of the most immediate operational risks, such as the level of involvement of relevant bodies, compatibility of some of the activities with the evolving national conditions, difficulties to achieve adequate coordination between stakeholders, quality of the expertise, etc. Again, this is a very useful exercise to be done together (during a participatory session with partners) as part of the road map of future activities.
- Linked to all the previous, **capacity building** remains essential, not only for ATI-NITA. The development of network enhancing activities and the exchange of experience, can reinforce considerably the performance and progress of many different areas of both projects, from the identification of expertise to improving advocacy. More brainstorming sessions, peer-to-peer training, and the exchange of experiences, establishing working groups on particular areas linked to the agreed priorities could be very useful. The knowledge gained in gender during the last phase would be an ideal space to promote more specialization and operationalisation of gender action, in line with the lines of action recommended to materialize the gender assessment undertaken during this period. For example, ensuring the uptake of a gender-accountable working culture within partner organisations, from senior management to the operational level, where top management should be accountable for the implementation of gender mainstreaming commitments, or encouraging Gender Focal Persons (women and men), appointed as “change agents” and participating to a gender network, working closely with the other organisations, as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and contribute actively to implement future steps.
- It is necessary to evaluate other forms of deployment in the field of the project, such as thematic experts who accompany the entire period or a large part of it (2-3 years). The project will be implemented in a way that experts specialised in climate change, gender and the productive sector (agro-industrial if possible) coexist and work together, with the aim of giving a decisive impulse to the project's actions in the first 2 years of the project. Subsequently, the main coordinator and thematic expert would stay on to supervise the actions already designed and implemented by his or her colleagues.
- Ideally that process of strengthened interactions, knowledge and exchange would link up to both the planning and implementation of each other (ATI-NITA and Communication and Visibility), other EU projects (ideally including the sub-regional level or other relevant EU regional initiatives like Eurosocla, Euroclima or Adelante), a more vigorous Team Europe presence and the support of other like-minded donors and important actors in Nicaragua and the sub-region. In other words, how to maximize the impact of European cooperation. During the phase subject to this evaluation one event under Communication and Visibility has taken place in Costa Rica and focused on books, children and the sub-region. Would not make sense to connect a few more communication activities (films, books, children, etc) to the sub-regional context, combat the progressive isolation of the country and promote the debate about freedom of expression, gender or support local governance or civil society?
- Undertake a collective **needs assessment** in order to reflect on the needs and expectations of the main partners, being them CSOs, schools, universities, etc. The process should be transparent, open, participative and rights based oriented. The outcomes of this exercise increase the ownership and support towards EU actions as well as guidance in aspects as relevant as the needs of different organisations, the state of cross-cutting issues, requests of capacity-building of smaller and weaker organisations, etc.

- The success of many development interventions nowadays derives from the potential to multiply efforts towards a common (policy) goal. In that process, how to stimulate collective learning by using techniques that encourage stocktaking and further action is a must of the required “software” that donors and other international cooperation organisations must know how to use. One example, which could be used for many purposes (including in combination with the previous two products mentioned) is more **outcomes harvesting** sessions. It has two advantages. On one hand, it enables identifying the kind of results that usually go under the radar and that very often are the most significant, such as changes in the attitudes of Government officials, their readiness to engage in a meaningful dialogue or their incorporation of suggestions and recommendations that could have an impact on national policies. All that is critical in the way cooperation should adapt to the current situation in Nicaragua. On the other hand, as mentioned before, because it instils a high level of ownership among the participants throughout the evolution of the initiative and, more importantly, a shared awareness of the progress that has been made to date; helping everyone to better understand the dynamics of the actions beyond the sort of linear simplifications that are so frequently stated at the intervention level.
- Bad quality in technical assistance products is often linked to poor expertise but it can also be associated to a lack of interest for more innovative products. It would not be a bad idea to think about a couple of flagship products or events (strongly linked to EU values) that relevant actors would support, give more exposure to Team Europe and, as just mentioned, resonate beyond Nicaragua. Woman Day could certainly be one of those.
- Link all that experience to a user-friendly Knowledge Bank, able to extract a wealth of reflections and lessons learned for collective thinking and improved management. This should involve systematizing also good practices and success stories. As a result of this process, the establishment of links within the country, mutual learning and the shared creation of solutions could increase the impact of the activities and, on the basis of the knowledge collected, additional techniques could be applied to understand the behavioural components that, for example, could trigger institutional change in Nicaragua. This could even be of great interest for other EUDs going through processes of democratic regression or the absence of political dialogue.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE – PART A
Final Evaluation for NITA SUPPORT Programme
FWC SIEA 2018 - LOT 3: Human Rights, Democracy and Peace
EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi
OPSYS reference number: SIEA-2018-9302

CONTRACTING AUTHORITY: THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO NICARAGUA

1	BACKGROUND	2
1.1	RELEVANT COUNTRY REGION BACKGROUND	2
1.2	THE INTERVENTIONS TO BE EVALUATED.....	3
1.3	STAKEHOLDERS OF THE INTERVENTION.....	8
1.4	PREVIOUS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MONITORING (INCL. ROM), EVALUATION AND OTHER STUDIES UNDERTAKEN	9
2	DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT	9
2.1	OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA	9
2.2	INDICATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS	10
2.3	STRUCTURING OF THE EVALUATION AND OUTPUTS	11
2.4	SPECIFIC CONTRACT ORGANISATION AND METHODOLOGY (TECHNICAL OFFER).....	14
2.5	MANAGEMENT AND STEERING OF THE EVALUATION	15
2.6	LANGUAGE OF THE SPECIFIC CONTRACT AND OF THE REPORTS	16
3	LOGISTICS AND TIMING	16
3.1	PLANNING, INCLUDING THE PERIOD FOR NOTIFICATION FOR PLACEMENT OF THE STAFF	16
4	REQUIREMENTS	16
5	REPORTS	16
5.1	USE OF THE EVAL MODULE BY THE EVALUATORS.....	16
5.2	NUMBER OF REPORT COPIES	16
5.3	FORMATTING OF REPORTS.....	16
6	MONITORING AND EVALUATION	17
6.1	CONTENT OF REPORTING	17
6.2	COMMENTS ON THE OUTPUTS.....	17
6.3	ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF THE FINAL REPORT AND OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	17
7	PRACTICAL INFORMATION	17
	ANNEX I: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX (LOGFRAME) OF THE EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS	18
	ANNEX II: THE EVALUATION CRITERIA	21
	ANNEX III: INFORMATION THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE EVALUATION TEAM	22
	ANNEX IV: THE EVALUATION MATRIX	23
	ANNEX V: STRUCTURE OF THE REPORTS	25
	ANNEX VI: PLANNING SCHEDULE	29
	ANNEX VII: EVAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRID	30
	GUIDANCE FOR THE COMPLETION OF PART B IN OPSYS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

BACKGROUND

1.1 Relevant country region background

Nicaragua's current National Development Plan 2012 – 2016 (NDP) presents the country's overall policy priorities and objectives. The plan has not been updated since 2016 but planning frameworks have subsequently been developed, including "Commitments of Good Governance"¹ (2017-2021), which contains an extensive number of social targets, as well as the "National Human Development Agenda" (2018-2021)². NDP's policies and targets are not linked to the National Budget. In the authorities' view, the 2012-2016 version of the NDP remains relevant as a general strategy with revised higher quantitative targets. As the NDP was initially released in 2012, it is not necessarily aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), although the government does generally commit to the 2030 Agenda.

The effectiveness of State institutions (at national and local level) is in general hampered by technical weaknesses. Nicaragua's weak public sector (at central, departmental and local levels) struggles to efficiently implement public policies. Statistical offices in the different institutions are weak, the statistical process is not articulated and the records lack quality. EU bilateral projects in Nicaragua are difficult to formulate due to the lack of objective studies, professional assessments and reliable information for decision making. The GoN does not dispose of the previous information, what makes very difficult the access to reliable information as a basis for discussion and decision making.

Nicaraguan general public, national institutions and beneficiaries do not always appreciate the share of EU's contribution to poverty reduction and development that the EU provides through its cooperation. The dispersion among a great amount of projects, partners and actors makes it difficult to make clearly visible and understandable the impact of EU cooperation in the country.

Nicaragua suffers from poverty and severe structural deficits in areas such as per capita income and production, education, environment, infrastructure, health and gender equality. It is one of the most unequal and least developed countries in the continent, and access to basic services remains a challenge.

Unfortunately the political dialogue with GoN had been decreased during this period and the execution of this programme couldn't delivered as it was planned. For this reason, supporting measures for capacity building and technical assistance as well the communication and visibility component, could only be developed directly for EU Delegation cooperation and the interlocution with GoN was very limited for just one component of this programme that concerns to statistics studies.

Additional, The country's vulnerability has been deepened for three (2018, 2019, 2020) consecutive years of economic contraction and the deterioration of democracy and human rights since the socio-political crisis of April 2018, having an strong impact on the economy, reducing formal jobs and increasing migration flows.

The Nicaraguan Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, MINREX) has a key role as concerns donors' coordination. Indeed, it is the institution mandated to lead coordination and ensure aid effectiveness. But, the country's vulnerability has been deepened by the deterioration of democracy and human rights since the socio-political crisis of April 2018. Since the crisis, the EU has reaffirmed its commitment to a democratic peaceful and negotiated solution, and to support the Nicaraguan people, including by helping strengthening the rule of law and promoting economic and social development for the most vulnerable, while avoiding politicisation of aid. The COVID-19 pandemic has further deteriorated the socio-economic situation and resulted in increased tensions. In November 2020, the two major hurricanes caused significant damages and compounded these challenges, particularly in the already vulnerable Caribbean and central north regions.

¹ *Compromisos de Buen Gobierno 2017-2021 | SITEAL (unesco.org)*

² *2 Gobierno Sandinista diseña ejes del Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Humano 2018-2021 - LVDS (lavozdelsandinismo.com)*
 INTPA-NEAR-FPI SIEA/OPSYS evaluation ToR – v.2.0

The protests of April 2018 and the Government's heavy-handed response triggered a violent socio-political crisis that laid bare what had been a gradual build-up of the population's grievances. The confrontations brought to the front the authorities' definitive shift towards authoritarianism, characterised by an unprecedented escalation of repression. The crisis had and continues to have significant economic repercussions for all, and particularly the Nicaraguans living in the most vulnerable situations.

During 2019 and 2020 the situation continued to worsen, further narrowing down the limited space for civil society, media, human rights activists and any opposition to the regime, as shown by the recent adoption of legislation aiming at increasing the government's grip on the population's civil and political rights.

Also, in 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic deepened the crisis further, deteriorating the socio-economic situation and resulted in increased tensions. In November 2020, the two major hurricanes caused significant damages and compounded these challenges, particularly in the already vulnerable Caribbean and central north regions.

Since the crisis, the EU has reaffirmed its commitment to a democratic peaceful and negotiated solution, and to support the Nicaraguan people, including by helping strengthening the rule of law and promoting economic and social development for the most vulnerable, while avoiding politicisation of aid.

With elections in 2021, it is suggested that the government will seek to consolidate its authoritarian hold on power, through a series of legal and electoral reforms as well as repression at all levels.

Although the current National Development Plan 2012 – 2016 lacks the up to date detail required to be an adequate basis for the upcoming EU programming, its priorities continue to be relevant for the 2021–2027 period as confirmed by the government, which recommends a continuation of the EU's Multi Annual Indicative Plan (MIP) 2014-2020 priorities. The NDP has therefore been used as a general reference for the identification of priorities, complemented by existing analysis and exchanges with government, and extensive consultations with private sector, civil society and other international actors.

For this reason the EU Delegation (EUD) carried out too a conflict analysis to inform the MIP 2021-2027 and to ensure all actions are conflict sensitive and can bring about positive change in the most likely scenarios. As EU direct cooperation with the government is almost inexistent at this point, this action will support civil society and the private sector directly, while coordinating technical aspects with relevant public instances. EU will need to adapt their development cooperation portfolios to the different post-election scenarios. In this context, a high degree of flexibility will be required to take advantage of potential opportunities and/or to respond to possible crises.

Given the ongoing socio-political crisis in Nicaragua, a cooperation facility is foreseen in order to promote dialogue with and support to CSO as appropriate: events, conferences, studies, and fellowships, exchange platforms leading to policy reforms and engagement with the government (coordination at technical level when necessary) and other stakeholders. A technical assistance instrument is also necessary to support analytical work as well as the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the different programmes and projects, as well as to support implementation of cross cutting work such as the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Human Rights and Democracy strategy. An instrument also earmarked to support visibility and communication initiatives portraying EU's cooperation work in Nicaragua.

1.2 The interventions to be evaluated³

This evaluation covers 2 interventions financed by the EU in the multisector aid as follows:

Titles of the interventions to be evaluated

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua (ATI NITA) |
|---|

³ The term 'intervention' is used throughout the report as a synonym of 'project and programme'.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servicios de comunicación y visibilidad de la cooperación europea en Nicaragua
Budgets of the interventions to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATI NITA: EUR 1,955,501.00 • COMM Y VISIBILIDAD: EUR 1,041,461.00
CRIS and/or OPSYS numbers of the interventions to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA/2017/387-771 • LA/2018/396-563
Dates of the interventions to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start date: 01/09/2017 02/05/2018
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End date: 30/06/2022 24/12/2022

To address the challenges mentioned, Nicaragua Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2014-2020 included supporting measures for capacity building and provided technical assistance in a more efficient and structured manner at a strategic level. This supposed to offer as a long term support to line ministries and decentralized entities, as well as other entities involved that are beneficiaries of the EU cooperation. The supporting measures were also earmarked for communication and visibility activities to create a strategic public diplomacy action to promote and make visible to target audience the EU contribution to reduce poverty, support growth and promote equality in the focal sectors of intervention.

The 2014-2020 strategy for Nicaragua covered a financial envelope of 169 M€ in 3 priority areas: education; productive sector and climate change. In all focal sectors, it was envisaged that a significant share of the portfolio could resort to sector wide approach with special emphasis on a chain value analysis. Previous experiences brought from 2007-2013 actions demonstrate that a strategically positioned and organised technical assistance scheme as well as efficient communication activities is paramount to ensure a swift programme implementation and the attainment of results and impact that the EU envisages for its development cooperation.

All the aforementioned sectors show weaknesses when it comes to monitoring and evaluating public policies. In such a context, it is difficult for decision makers to set national priorities and assess their impact. Similarly, the impact of the EU strategy 2014-2020 could hardly be measured.

Another theme in common to all three sectors is communication strategy. In fact, so far EU projects have achieved their own visibility and communication. A structured cooperation between the EUD and communication correspondents in national institutions has been already developed and allowed to implement some visibility actions. However, there is no truly comprehensive communication strategy on EU development cooperation with Nicaragua as a whole - as opposed to individual projects. Such a strategy must be based on a deep understanding of the context in which the EU operates and provide the tools to measure its impact. The EU in Nicaragua needs to improve its communication to promote joint achievements with Nicaragua in the sectors of cooperation, the transmission of key values, clear messages, and the promotion of transparency and accountability on EU-Nicaragua development cooperation.

The 2014-2020 PIM for Nicaragua of the European Union provides for cooperation in 3 priority areas: productive sector (agriculture and agribusiness), education for employment and adaptation to climate change. In all sectors of activity, it is anticipated that a significant part of the portfolio or portfolio of

projects could be formulated under a sectoral approach, with special emphasis on the analysis of the value chain.

Previous experiences of EU actions for 2007-2013 show that a strategically organized technical assistance plan as well as optimal reporting are essential to ensure rapid implementation of the program and the achievement of results and impact envisaged for development cooperation. This action should contribute to developing capacities for a more effective and efficient application of public policies and EU cooperation activities, and guarantee that the prioritized sectors achieve maximum results and impact.

This action was adopted as to facilitate a strategic and well-structured process to strengthen capacities and dialogue on public policies, in addition to strengthening the capacity of the Government of Nicaragua to develop policies based on actions that respond to needs, allow the design of sector projects, set goals, monitor progress and evaluate impact. It is planned to provide technical assistance to carry out specific studies, opportunities for the transfer and exchange of knowledge, training among peers, to achieve the results and the impact of the strategy in the country. It should become the instrument that contributes to optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of EU interventions in Nicaragua, reducing and / or mitigating risks and drawing lessons from the experience of EU cooperation in the country to date.

In the MIP 2014–2020, eight million Euros were been set aside for support measures. The "Nicaragua Technical Assistance Support" (NITA-SUPPORT) project, was meant to contribute to building capacity for a more effective and efficient implementation of public policies and of EU cooperation activities, ensuring that the focal sectors reach maximum results, impact and visibility. NITA-Support was meant to be the instrument to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of EU interventions in Nicaragua, contributing to mitigate the risks and draw the lessons from the EU's previous experience of cooperation in the country.

But, because of the limited political dialogue with GoN it was very difficult to coordinate the way of initiate the develop of the execution of the programme, and for this reason the EUD start to create small contracts that responded directly to requirements of the EU cooperation in terms of communication and visibility and technical assistance. In the decision there are 15 contracts in total, three of them are the most important because respond to the reason for which it was created, one of them, is the only that is really coordinated with the GoN which purpose is oriented to national statistic, and this contract has his own planed evaluation and audit, reason for why the EUD consider it is not necessary to include it in to this exercise.

This leave with the rest of the contracts that correspond to the technical assistance cooperation (CTR 387-771) and communication and visibility actions of the EU cooperation (CTR 396-563). The TA was designed to facilitate a well-structured and strategic capacity building process, providing long-term and short-term technical support, specific studies, opportunities for knowledge sharing and transfer and peer-to-peer training. The communications and visibility actions were oriented to achieve the results and impact of the programme as a whole.

NITA-SUPPORT throw these two contracts, it was expected to provided short-term technical assistance, specific studies, opportunities for knowledge sharing and transfer, peer-to-peer training, as well as communication and visibility strategic actions, in order to achieve the results and impact of the country strategy as a whole.

The two interventions to be evaluated are:

- 1. Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua (ATI NITA)**

This intervention pretended to be achieved through the improvement of the government institutions' capacity to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate sector policies linked to their National Development Plan, especially in relation to the 3 focal sectors of the MIP 2014-2020 for Nicaragua. It also made efforts so that national institutions are able to provide information and statistical judgment in a timely, transparent, impartial and accessible manner.

NITA-SUPPORT it was expected to have a positive impact in supporting a better identification, formulation and implementation of EU projects and on the other side, to strengthened technical capacities of line ministries, decentralized entities, and other institutions involved in actions derived from the implementation of CSP 2014-2020.

This TA was adopted to facilitate the provision of global services with short and long-term missions, as well as specific actions to support the planning and programming processes of the GoN and the projects financed by the EU for the sectors of the Pluriannual Indicative Program (PIM) for Nicaragua. The provision of technical assistance it was planned to be based on demand and expected to be arranged with government institutions and beneficiaries for each sector.

This "transversal" support in the priority sectors of the PIM it was planned to facilitate a well-structured and strategic capacity-building process. Likewise, it was expected to contribute to reducing transaction costs. In the strengthening of capacities, innovative ways such as a learning platform and knowledge management as well as "peer-to-peer training" should be explored, in addition to possible proposals or solutions to facilitate the retention of human resources trained by the projects, among other further initiatives or innovative methodologies may be suggested by the contractor. Missions should also be contracted to carry out studies (including formulations and gender profiles), trainings and events in charge of this contract, among others (non-exhaustive list).

All studies and trainings to develop, were planned to include issues referred to gender equality and human rights as well as those elements that can contribute to improve transparency and accountability of EU-Nicaragua cooperation.

This action was designed as an instrument managed by the Delegation of the European Union in Nicaragua to give a prompt and efficient response to specific needs for capacity building and formulation and management of actions related to the PIM focal sectors.

A list of possible areas in which this NITA contract it was expected to support the development/strengthening of capacities and good practices in the 3 priority sectors of the CSP:

- Identification, formulation and implementation of projects.
- Formulation and evaluation of public policies.
- Integration of gender equity.
- Result-oriented management.
- Planning of technical studies for analysis, dissemination of results and impact.
- Development of information, follow-up and monitoring systems.
- Accompaniment to the joint programming process and aid effectiveness.
- Interaction and dialogue with civil society.

In addition to the priority sectors of the MIP, specific TA could be supported in relation to topics such as:

- Public finance management.
- Macroeconomic policies.
- Transparency, including access to public information related to the projects.
- Strengthening of administrative management.
- Regional integration and association agreement (AA), and regional value chains.

-Environmental protection, as a cross-cutting issue.

For project monitoring, the following preliminary indicators have been defined:

- Development, economic and sectoral policies in priority areas implemented efficiently and effectively, integrating the aspects of vulnerability, gender and the environment.
- Programs and projects with strategic planning that generate greater impact in the priority sectors of the CSP.
- Institutions strengthened in their sectoral planning and programming systems.
- Cooperation programs that integrate tangible elements of gender equality and contribute significantly to the fulfillment of the goals of the EU Gender Action Plan.
- European cooperation in Nicaragua contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the indicators of the Results Framework.

2. Servicios de comunicación y visibilidad de la cooperación europea en Nicaragua

This component it was designed to support the efforts to increase the communication directed to the general public on the results and impact of EU cooperation and make it more visible, understandable and transparent, as well as supporting Nicaragua policy making accountability. This approach is also intended to move from a purely projects-based promotional visibility to interactive and pro-active communication. The EU it was expected to also seek to engage with stakeholders on a number of key issues.

The purpose of this contract is to improve communication on the results and impact of EU cooperation to make it more understandable. This approach also aims to go beyond purely individual project-based promotional visibility to be more strategic, interactive and proactive communication and also try to engage with our stakeholders on a number of key issues.

The communication expectations of this new approach are:

- Strengthened the positioning of the EU brand as a global actor, promotor of development, peace, democracy and human rights, and increase knowledge and understanding of the EU's work in Nicaragua.
- Improved the impact and scope of EU communication actions to make visible in a strategic way (harmonized and coherent), the results of development cooperation in the lives of Nicaraguans.
- Position the EU as a key, strategic and positive contributor to Nicaragua's development and as a necessary ally to address shared challenges.
- Make visible the most important achievements of the EU in the eradication of poverty, especially in the three key sectors identified in the cooperation strategy 2014-2020: 1) education for employment, 2) adaptation to climate change and 3) support the productive sector, as well as in the promotion of gender equality as a transversal axis to the 3 priority areas.

For this purpose, at the beginning of 2017, a "Communication Diagnosis" was carried out at the country level through the use of various research tools (surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, media analysis and online presence). Likewise, based on this diagnosis a "Communication Strategy 2018-2020 European Union - Nicaragua" was drawn up. Both documents provide elements for this new form of strategic communication to become a reality, but qualitative improvements are still required.

It was foreseen to create a baseline on the perception of the EU in Nicaragua as an actor and a donor, as well as defining priority messages (shaped on CSP main sectors) and communication targets.

It was expected to design and implement an innovative, inclusive and interactive Communication and visibility strategy on EU development cooperation in Nicaragua following an overall diagnosis.

This action was designed to develop and implement activities to activate people's interest in, and knowledge of, the EU cooperation and overall relationship with Nicaragua, in close partnership with Nicaragua.

The Logical Framework attached as Annex I describes the intervention logic at the level of the Financing Decision, and the intervention 1, while logical framework at the level of the second intervention to be evaluated have not been developed.

Complementary Actions

For cooperation period 2014-2020, two important education projects (totalling EUR 47 million) included specific TA and institutional strengthening actions for a total of EUR 6.5 million in this sector that coordinated in time and scope with existing TA. They helped to adapt to eventual changes in the context and support the formulation of future programmes or in case of specific requests.

At regional level, the EU is contributing to the International Monetary Fund's Regional Technical Assistance Centre for Central America, Panama and Dominican Republic (*Centro regional de Asistencia Técnica de Centro America, Panama y República Dominicana, CAPTAC-DR*). This centre offers support to national governments of the region, amongst others, to strengthen their macroeconomic statistics.

Also in the area of statistics, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) prepared to support the BCN in modernizing its cartography and statistical system. The Government is also calling for support from the donors' community to fund the new census (initially foreseen for 2015, but then postponed to 2016).

The sub-regional support measure programme created a strategic and long term communication framework that is flexible and that adapts to local changing circumstances. It is also complementary with ongoing communication and visibility efforts led by individual EU projects.

Donor coordination

NITA-SUPPORT was meant to be a key asset to support coordination mechanisms in all three priority sectors of the CSP, but the dialogue with the government has been deteriorated in the last years following the 2018 socio-political crisis.

1.3 Stakeholders of the intervention

The following table describes the key stakeholders of the intervention.

Stakeholder groups	Role and involvement in the intervention	How the intervention is expected to impact on the stakeholder group
Implementing partners	Consortium IDOM Consulting Communication Agency Apple Tree	
National partners	Decentralized, regional and local institutions Donors' organizations ONGs, investigations organizations Academy Foundations	For the implementation of the PNDH, there is a need to strengthen the capacity to implement and monitor strategic development policies as well as service delivery. Support to sectors where policy implementation is mainly done at decentralized levels (e.g. agriculture and cattle chain, climate change). These coordination mechanisms are the scenario where technical discussion related to policy issues, joint performance assessment

		and crosscutting topics take place under a harmonized oriented way.
Target groups	National authorities, international organizations, EU Member States, Non-state actors	At the same time are target audience of our communication efforts. The action is pretend to make an effort to reach more distant regions such as the Northern and Southern Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast.
End beneficiaries	EU Ongoing projects Key Experts Youth Students and academics	

1.4 Previous internal and external monitoring (incl. ROM), evaluation and other studies undertaken

No previous ROM or evaluations conducted

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT

Type of evaluation	Final
Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA/2017/387-771 LA/2018/396-563
Geographic scope	Nicaragua
Period to be evaluated	01/09/2017 to 31/01/2022

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation and evaluation criteria

Systematic and timely evaluation of its programmes and activities is an established priority⁴ of the European Commission⁵. The focus of evaluations is on the assessment of achievements, the **quality** and the

⁴ COM(2013) 686 final "Strengthening the foundations of Smart Regulation – improving evaluation" - http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/docs/com_2013_686_en.pdf; EU Financial regulation (art 27); Regulation (EC) No 1905/2000; Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006; Council Regulation (EC) No 215/2008

⁵ SEC (2007)213 "Responding to Strategic Needs: Reinforcing the use of evaluation", http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/docs/eval_comm_sec_2007_213_en.pdf; SWD (2015)111 "Better Regulation Guidelines", http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/swd_br_guidelines_en.pdf; COM(2017) 651 final 'Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results', https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/completing-the-better-regulation-agenda-better-solutions-for-better-results_en.pdf

results⁶ of interventions in the context of an evolving cooperation policy, with an increasing emphasis on **result-oriented approaches and the contribution towards the implementation of the SDGs.⁷**

From this perspective, evaluations should **look for evidence of why, whether and how the EU intervention(s) has/have contributed to the achievement of these results** and seek to **identify the factors driving or hindering progress.**

The main objectives of this evaluation are to provide the relevant services of the European Union, the interested stakeholders and the wider public with:

- An overall independent assessment of the performance of the Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua (ATI NITA) and Servicios de comunicación y visibilidad de la cooperación europea en Nicaragua, paying particular attention to its different levels of results measured against its expected objectives; and the reasons underpinning such results;
- Key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future interventions.

In particular, this evaluation will serve to understand the results of these interventions and their determining factors as well as any relevant lessons to support the formulation of a new support measure programme by the Delegation of the next programming cycle 2022-2024.

The main users of this evaluation will be EU Delegation to Nicaragua and implementation partners of both contracts.

The evaluation will assess the intervention(s) using the **three standard DAC evaluation criteria**, namely: **relevance, effectiveness** and **sustainability**. In addition, the evaluation will assess the intervention(s) through an **EU specific evaluation criterion**, which is the **EU added value**.

The evaluation will not analyse the **coherence** and **efficiency** of the intervention(s). This is justified by the small budget of the 2 interventions and the main purpose of the evaluation, which aims at obtaining relevant lessons to support the formulation of the new support measure.

The **definition** of the 6 DAC + 1 EU **evaluation criteria** is contained for reference in **Annex II**.

Furthermore, the evaluation team should consider whether **gender equality and women's empowerment⁸**, **environment** and **adaptation to climate change** were mainstreamed; the relevant **SDGs and their interlinkages** were identified; the principle of **Leave No One Behind** and the **rights-based approach methodology** was followed in the identification/formulation documents and the extent to which they have been reflected in the implementation of the intervention, its governance and monitoring.

2.2 Indicative Evaluation Questions

The specific EQs, as formulated below, are indicative. Following initial consultations and document analysis, and further to the finalisation/reconstruction of the Intervention Logic of the intervention(s) to be

⁶ Reference is made to the entire results chain, covering outputs, outcomes and impacts. Cfr. Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 "Laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action" - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financal_assistance/ipa/2014/236-2014_cir.pdf.

⁷ The New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future', Official Journal 30th of June 2017. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2017:210:TOC>

⁸ Read more on Evaluation with gender as a cross-cutting dimension by following this link: [new link to C4D to be publish](#)

evaluated, the evaluation team will discuss these with the Evaluation Manager⁹ and Reference Group, and propose in their Inception Report a complete and finalised set of Evaluation Questions. This will include an indication of specific judgement criteria and indicators, as well as the relevant data collection sources and tools.

Once agreed through the approval of the Inception Report, the Evaluation Questions will become contractually binding.

Relevance:

1. To what extent were the interventions relevant at the time of their contracting and to what extent did they remain relevant throughout implementation?
2. To what extent the interventions represented and still represent an adequate response to the needs and rights of the target groups and end beneficiaries?
3. Is the choice of IP/method of implementation proving to be appropriate in comparison with other options?

Effectiveness:

1. To what extent were outputs delivered on time and to what extent were them of the expected quality?
2. Did the interventions achieve their expected results at the outcome level, which are respectively "the improvement of the government institutions' capacity to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate sector policies linked to their National Development Plan, especially in relation to the 3 focal sectors of the MIP 2014-2020 for Nicaragua" and "a better, more coherent, strategic and measurable approach to the communication of European cooperation, which corresponds to the general relations between the EU and Nicaragua"?
3. To what extent have the priorities identified in the Communication Strategy 2018-20 been implemented, and with what results?
4. What elements played in favour or against the achievement of results?

Sustainability:

1. What are the perspectives of sustainability of the two interventions in terms of commitment of executors and beneficiaries, their capacity and in terms of financial resources, and in particular:
 - a. Are realistic plans in place that involve the relevant stakeholders?
 - b. what is the expected financial impact of sustainability and are these resources available?

Cross-cutting issues

1. What is the contribution of the two interventions to improving gender equality in the EU Cooperation, women empowerment and to help addressing social inequalities in Nicaragua?
2. To what extent do the interventions adhere to the working principles of the rights-based approach?

2.3 Structuring of the evaluation and outputs

The evaluation process will be carried out in 3 phases and one activity:

- Inception phase
- Interim phase
 - Desk Activities

⁹ The Evaluation Manager is the staff member of the Contracting Authority managing the evaluation contract. In most cases this person will be the Operational Manager of the Action(s) under evaluation.

- Synthesis phase

Throughout the evaluation and following the approval of the Inception Report, if any significant deviation from the work plan could compromise the quality of the evaluation or jeopardise the completion of the specific contract within the contractual timeframe, these elements are to be immediately discussed with the Evaluation Manager and, regarding the validity of the contract, corrective measures undertaken.

2.3.1 Inception Phase

Objectives of the phase: to structure the evaluation and clarify the key issues to be addressed.

Main activities of evaluators during the Inception Phase

- Initial review of background documents (see Annex IV).
- Kick-off session between the Reference Group and the evaluators. Objectives of the meeting: i) to arrive at a clear and shared understanding of the scope of the evaluation, its limitations and feasibility; ii) to clarify expectations of the evaluation; iii) to illustrate the tentative methodology to be used; iv) any other relevant objectives.
- Initial interviews with key stakeholders.
- Finalisation or reconstruction of the description of the Intervention Logic/Theory of Change and its underlying assumptions. This requires an assessment of the evidence (between the hierarchy of results e.g. outputs, outcomes and impact) and the assumptions necessary for the intervention to work or prevent change from happening.
- Graphic representation of the reconstructed/finalised Intervention Logic/Theory of Change.
- Finalisation of the Evaluation Questions, based on the indicative questions contained in the Terms of Reference and on the reconstructed Intervention Logic.
- Finalisation of the evaluation methodology, including the definition of judgement criteria and indicators per Evaluation Question, the selection of data collection tools and sources. The methodology should be gender sensitive, contemplate the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and assess if and how interventions have contributed to progress on gender equality.
- The methodology will include the proposed representative sample of interventions to be analysed in greater detail to inform the assessment of performance and results/sustainability. The selection of this sample should be underpinned by a clear methodology (incl. selection criteria used).
- Representation of the methodological approach in an Evaluation Matrix (see Annex IV).
- Workplan of subsequent phases.
- Identification of the expected risks and limitations of the methodology, and of the envisaged mitigation measures.
- Preparation of the Inception Report; its content is described in Annex V.
- Presentation of the Inception Report to the Reference Group, supported by a slide presentation.
- Revision of the report (as relevant) following receipt of comments.

2.3.2 Interim Phase

This phase is entirely devoted to gathering and analysing the information required to provide preliminary answers to the EQs. Work in this phase will consist of one activity:

1. Desk activities - review interviews with key stakeholders and other initial data collection using different tools such as surveys and data collection and analysis with the aim of testing the hypotheses identified during the 'Desk activities'.

2.3.2.1 Desk activities

Objective of the phase: to analyse the relevant secondary data and conducting primary research.

Main activities of evaluators

- Completion of in-depth analysis of relevant documents and other secondary sources, to be done systematically and to reflect the methodology as described in the Inception Report.
- Selected interviews to support the analysis of secondary data, as relevant.
- Formulation of the preliminary responses to each Evaluation Question, with analysis of their validity and limitations.
- Identification of the issues still to be covered and of the preliminary hypotheses to be tested during primary research.
- Presentation of the preliminary findings emerging from the desk review (incl. gaps and hypotheses to be tested in the field) to kick-off the in-country portion of this phase, supported by a slide presentation.
- Completion of primary research following the methodology described in the Inception Report.
- Guarantee of adequate contact, consultation with, and involvement of the different stakeholders, including the relevant government authorities and agencies, throughout the phase.
- Use of the most reliable and appropriate sources of information, respecting the rights of individuals to provide information in confidence, and being sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments, throughout the phase.
- Preparation of the Intermediary Note; its content is described in Annex V.
- Preparation of a slide presentation of intermediate/preliminary (Desk) findings and preliminary conclusions (to be tested with the Reference group) (free format).
- Presentation of the intermediate/preliminary (Desk) findings and preliminary conclusions to the Reference Group, supported by the slide presentation.

2.3.3 Synthesis Phase

Objectives of the phase: to report on results from the evaluation (final answers to the Evaluation Questions (final findings) and formulate conclusions and recommendations).

Main activities of evaluators

- Analysis and synthesis of the evidence and data collected during the previous phases to provide a final answer to the Evaluation Questions.
- Preparation of the Draft Final Report; its content is described in Annex V.
- Presentation of the Draft Final Report to the Reference Group, supported by a slide presentation.
- Preparation of a response to the draft QAG (Quality Assessment Grid) formulated by the Evaluation Manager via the EVAL module¹⁰.
- Once the comments on the Draft Final Report are received from the Evaluation Manager, addressing those that are relevant and producing the Final Report, upload to the EVAL module; its content is described in Annex V. While potential quality issues, factual errors or methodological problems should be corrected, comments linked to diverging judgements may be either accepted or rejected. In the latter instance, the evaluators must explain the reasons in writing (free format).
- Preparation of the Executive Summary and upload to the EVAL module by using the compulsory format given in the module.
- Inclusion of an executive summary (free text format) in the Final Report (see Annex V).

The evaluators will make sure that:

- their assessments are objective and balanced, statements are accurate and evidence-based, and recommendations realistic and clearly targeted;

¹⁰ All mentions to the EVAL module throughout the text in accordance with the Art.43.3 of the "Draft Framework Contract Agreement and Special Conditions" of the SIEA Framework Contract. The module EVAL will be integrated into OPSYS.

- when drafting the report, they will acknowledge clearly where changes in the desired direction are known to be taking place already;
- The wording, inclusive of the abbreviations used, considers the audience as identified in Art. 2.1 above.

2.3.4 Overview of the outputs and meetings and their timing

The synoptic table below presents an overview of the outputs to be produced by the team, the key meetings with the Reference Group (including the Evaluation Managers) as described previously, as well as their timing.

Evaluation phases	Outputs and meetings	Timing
Inception phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting: kick off</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>After initial document analysis</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Inception Phase
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Inception Phase
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting: presentation Inception Report</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Inception Phase
Interim: Desk activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting: presentation of preliminary findings (to be tested) emerging from the desk work</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortly before or at the beginning of the field missions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediary note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Interim (Desk and Field) Phase
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Interim (Desk and Field) Phase
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting: debriefing on intermediate/preliminary (Desk) findings</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Interim (Desk and Field) Phase
Synthesis phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Final Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting: presentation of the Draft Final Report</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments to the draft QAG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together with Final Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 days after receiving comments on Draft Final Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive summary of the Final Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together with Final Report

2.4 Specific contract Organisation and Methodology (Technical offer)

The invited framework contractors will submit their specific contract Organisation and Methodology by using the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i and its Annexes 1 and 2 (B-VII-d-ii).

The evaluation methodology proposed to undertake the assignment will be described in Chapter 3 (Strategy and timetable of work) of the template B-VII-d-i. Contractors will describe how their proposed

methodology will address the cross-cutting issues mentioned in these Terms of Reference; it should be gender sensitive, contemplate the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and demonstrate how interventions have contributed to progress on gender equality.

By derogation of what is specified in the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i, the maximum length of the specific contract Organisation and Methodology is usually up to 15 pages, written in Times New Roman 12 or Arial size 11, single interline, excluding the Framework Contractor's own annexes (maximum length of such annexes: 3 pages), additional to the annexes foreseen as part of the present specific ToRs. The timetable is not included in this limit and may be presented on an A3 page]

The selected Framework Contractors are invited to consider that this evaluation is to be carried out remotely. Their proposed methodology shall therefore reflect this requirement.

2.4.1 Evaluation ethics

All evaluations must be credible and free from bias; they must respect dignity and diversity, and protect stakeholders' rights and interests. Evaluators must ensure confidentiality and anonymity of informants and be guided by professional standards and ethical and moral principles in the observation of the 'do no harm' principle. The approach of framework contractors to observe these obligations must be explicitly addressed in the specific Organisation and Methodology, and implemented by the evaluation team throughout the evaluation, including during dissemination of results.

2.5 Management and steering of the evaluation

2.5.1 At the EU level

The evaluation is managed by the Evaluation Manager of the EUD; the progress of the evaluation will be followed closely with the assistance of a Reference Group consisting of members of EU Services: Ángel Pacheco and Isabel Tercero.

The main functions of the Reference Group are:

- to define and validate the Evaluation Questions;
- to facilitate contacts between the evaluation team and the EU services and external stakeholders;
- to ensure that the evaluation team has access to, and has consulted with, all relevant information sources and documents related to the intervention;
- to discuss and comment on notes and reports delivered by the evaluation team. Comments by individual group members are compiled into a single document by the Evaluation Manager and subsequently transmitted to the evaluation team;
- to assist in feedback on the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations from the evaluation;
- to support the development of a proper follow-up action plan after completion of the evaluation.

2.5.2 At the Contractor level

Further to the requirements set out in Article 6 of the Global Terms of Reference and in the Global Organisation and Methodology, respectively Annexes II and III of the Framework contract SIEA 2018, the contractor is responsible for the quality of the process, the evaluation design, the inputs and the outputs of the evaluation. In particular, it will:

- support the Team Leader in its role, mainly from a team management perspective. In this regard, the contractor should make sure that, for each evaluation phase, specific tasks and outputs for each team member are clearly defined and understood;
- provide backstopping and quality control for the evaluation team's work throughout the assignment;

- ensure that the evaluators are adequately resourced to perform all required tasks within the time framework of the contract.

2.6 Language of the specific contract and of the reports

The language of the specific contract is to be English

All reports will be submitted in English.

The entirety of the following report will be furthermore translated into: Spanish

- Final Report

3 LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Please refer to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

3.1 Planning, including the period for notification for placement of the staff¹¹

As part of the technical offer, the framework contractor must fill in the timetable in the Annex VI (to be finalised in the Inception Report). The 'indicative dates' are not to be formulated as fixed dates but rather as days (or weeks or months) from the beginning of the assignment (to be referenced as '0').

Sufficient forward planning is to be taken into account in order to ensure the active participation and consultation with government representatives, national/local or other stakeholders.

4 REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

All the costs other than costs for key experts of the evaluation team will be reflected in a dedicated budget provision under the chapter "Other details" of the framework contractor's financial offer.

5 REPORTS

For the list of reports, please refer to Chapter 2.3 of Part A and to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

5.1 Use of the EVAL module by the evaluators

The selected contractor will **submit all deliverables by uploading them into the EVAL Module**, an evaluation process management tool and repository of the European Commission. The selected contractor will receive access to online and offline guidance in order to operate with the module during the related specific contract validity.

5.2 Number of report copies

Apart from its submission, the approved version of the Final Report will be also provided in one paper copies and in electronic PDF version at no extra cost.

5.3 Formatting of reports

All reports will be produced using Font Arial or Times New Roman minimum letter size 11 and 12 respectively, single spacing, double sided. They will be sent in Word and PDF formats.

¹¹ As per Article 16.4 a) of the General Conditions of the Framework Contract SIEA

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Content of reporting

The outputs must match quality standards. The text of the reports should be illustrated, as appropriate, with maps, graphs and tables; a map of the area(s) of intervention is required (to be attached as annex).

6.2 Comments on the outputs

For each report, the Evaluation Manager will send the contractor consolidated comments received from the Reference Group or the approval of the report within 7 calendar days. The revised reports addressing the comments will be submitted within 10 calendar days from the date of receipt of the comments. The evaluation team should provide a separate document explaining how and where comments have been integrated or the reason for not integrating certain comments, if this is the case.

6.3 Assessment of the quality of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary

The quality of the draft versions of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager using the online Quality Assessment Grid (QAG) in the EVAL Module (text provided in Annex VII). The Contractor is given the chance to comment on the assessments formulated by the Evaluation Manager through the EVAL module. The QAG will then be reviewed, following the submission of the final version of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary.

The compilation of the QAG will support/inform the compilation of the FWC SIEA's specific contract Performance Evaluation by the Evaluation Manager.

7 PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Please address any request for clarification and other communication to the following address:



ANNEXES TO TOR - PART A

ANNEX I: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX (LOGFRAME) OF THE EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS

DCI-ALA/2014/037-424 Asistencia Técnica de apoyo a Nicaragua

	Lógica de Intervención	Indicadores objetivamente verificables	LdB	Meta	Fuentes y medios de verificación	Hipótesis/riesgos
Objetivo General	Contribuir al objetivo nacional de erradicación de la pobreza en el contexto del desarrollo sostenible, incluyendo la consecución de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio (ODM), así como la promoción y protección de los derechos humanos y el estado de derechos establecidos en la estrategia nacional de desarrollo.					
Objetivo Específico	Contribuir a una aplicación más eficaz y eficiente de las políticas públicas y de las actividades de cooperación de la UE, lo que garantizará que los sectores priorizados por el CSP 2014-2020 alcancen los máximos resultados, el impacto y la visibilidad	Políticas de desarrollo, económicas y sectoriales en áreas prioritarias puestas en marcha, integrando los aspectos de vulnerabilidad, género y medio ambiente. Incremento de la percepción de la ayuda de la UE			Evaluación final Sondeo de medición de percepción	

Resultado Esperado 1.	Fortalecer el sector público (a nivel central, departamental y local) en planificación estratégica y estadísticas.	Mejorado el seguimiento a los indicadores del CSP 2014-2020. Instituciones fortalecidas en los sistemas de estadísticas sectoriales.			Monitoreo y evaluaciones del proyecto. Informes y reportes de mesas de diálogo	
Resultado Esperado 2.	Impulsado un mejor, más coherente, estratégico y medible enfoque de la comunicación de la cooperación europea, que corresponda a las relaciones generales entre la UE y Nicaragua.	Visitas totales anuales a la Página Web de la DUE Visitas totales anuales a la sección "Proyectos" de la DUE Número de artículos en los dos mayores periódicos nacionales sobre la cooperación de la UE con Nicaragua	71142 (visitas 2014) Na 103 (2014)	-72000 (2015) -73000 (2016) -75000 (2017) -incremento anual del 10% desde 2016 -120 (2015) -130 (2016) -150 (2017)	Estadísticas de la Página Web de la Delegación UE Estadísticas de la Página Web de la Delegación UE Monitoreo de la Delegación UE	
Actividades Resultado 1			Medios	Cotos (euros)	Condiciones	
Act.1 Fortalecer las capacidades del personal que trabaja en los ministerios, entidades descentralizadas y otras instituciones involucradas en las acciones que derivan del CSP 2014-2020, a través de asistencia técnica específica según demanda.				1,700,000		
Act.2 Fortalecer la generación y procesamiento de la información estadística, para brindar información objetiva a los tomadores de decisiones y evaluar el impacto de las políticas públicas y las intervenciones de la UE. Esta actividad se centra en fortalecer y modernizar el Sistema de Estadísticas Nacionales y el censo nacional.				4,150,000		
Actividades Resultado 2:						
Act.3 Diseñar e implementar una estrategia innovadora, integradora e interactiva de Comunicación y Visibilidad sobre la cooperación al desarrollo de la UE en Nicaragua.				1,400,000		
Otros: Evaluación, auditoría, imprevistos				750,000		
Costos totales de actividades				8,000,000		

1. Asistencia técnica a la implementación de la estrategia de cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua (ATI NITA)

MATRIZ DE PLANIFICACIÓN ATI-NITA REFORMULADA				
LÓGICA DE LA INTERVENCIÓN		IOV	FdV	HIPÓTESIS
OG IND: BENEFICIO PARA LA SOCIEDAD O EL DESEMPEÑO INSTITUCIONAL	Se ha contribuido a mejorar la eficacia de las políticas públicas y de las actividades de cooperación de la UE en relación a las tres áreas prioritizadas en el MIP Nicaragua	<p>I.OE.1 A la finalización del MIP, al menos el 90% de las intervenciones formuladas en el periodo del NITA y ejecutadas por el GdN, entidades de la sociedad civil y otros organismos ejecutores de proyectos de la UE han alcanzado niveles de ejecución física de al menos el 80% sobre lo planificado para el periodo.</p> <p>I.OE.2 A la finalización del MIP, el 90% las intervenciones del GdN formuladas en el periodo de ejecución del NITA con apoyo de la UE registran un cumplimiento de sus indicadores de al menos el 80%</p> <p>I.OE.3 A la finalización del MIP, se ha registrado el cumplimiento de al menos el 80% de los indicadores del plan de acción de género de la Unión Europea en Nicaragua.</p> <p>I.O.G.4 El informe de la siguiente evaluación país de la UE, valora positivamente la eficacia del MIP 2014-2020 en Nicaragua.</p>	<p>Informes de seguimiento/ informes finales/evaluaciones de las intervenciones insertas en el MIP</p> <p>Sistema de seguimiento DUE Informe final ATI.NITA /sistematización</p> <p>Informe de evaluación MIP 2014-2020</p> <p>Informe de seguimiento del Plan de Acción de Género UE</p> <p>Instrumentos: archivo de documentación del proyecto, encuestas internas.</p>	<p>El GdN mantiene las prioridades de desarrollo definidas en la formulación del PNDH</p> <p>Se mantiene el nivel de interlocución y colaboración con el Gobierno Nicaragüense.</p> <p>No se producen en el país fenómenos naturales de magnitud catastrófica.</p> <p>Se mantienen estables los niveles de gobernabilidad, seguridad y estabilidad.</p>
OE IND: UTILIZACIÓN DEL CONOCIMIENTO	Se han mejorado los procesos de formulación, ejecución y monitoreo de las políticas, programas y/o proyectos relacionados a la implementación de la Estrategia de Cooperación de la Unión Europea en Nicaragua.	<p>I.O.E.1 A la finalización del proyecto, el 90% de las intervenciones formuladas en el periodo de ejecución han sido evaluadas internamente según criterios de calidad de diseño</p> <p>I.O.E.2 A la finalización del proyecto, el 90% de los programas formulados con recursos de la UE en el periodo de ejecución cuentan con IOV.</p> <p>I.O.E.3 A la finalización del proyecto, el 90% de los programas financiados durante el periodo de ejecución del NITA con recursos de la UE durante el periodo de aplicación cuentan con evaluaciones externas o sistematizaciones finales.</p> <p>I.O.E.4 A la finalización del proyecto, al menos el 90% de las intervenciones incorporan en su diseño indicadores de género</p> <p>I.O.E.5 A la finalización del proyecto, al menos el 90% de las formulaciones desarrolladas en el periodo de ejecución del NITA han utilizado técnicas de análisis de género en su identificación.</p> <p>I.O.E.6 A la finalización del proyecto, el 100% de las evaluaciones contratadas durante el periodo de ejecución, incorporan el mandato de analizar el impacto de los proyectos en mujeres y niñas.</p>	<p>Informes de seguimiento ATI-NITA</p> <p>Informes de análisis y recomendaciones ATI/NITA a los procesos de formulación-informes de seguimiento ATI/NITA</p> <p>Informe final del PAG-DUE</p>	<p>Las instituciones y personas involucradas proveen de la documentación e información necesaria</p> <p>Se mantiene el nivel de apoyo de los niveles directivos a la mejora de los procesos de calidad</p>
R1 IND: ADQUISICIÓN DEL CONOCIMIENTO	Fortalecidas las capacidades de los ministerios, entidades descentralizadas y otras instituciones públicas de Nicaragua en sus procesos de formulación,	<p>I.R.1.1 A la finalización del primer año de ejecución, el 80% del personal beneficiario de ATI-NITA del sector público manifiesta la utilidad de su asistencia técnica en el desempeño de su trabajo.</p> <p>I.R.1.2 A la finalización del primer año de ejecución, el 80% del personal del sector público participante en acciones formativas ha superado las evaluaciones de adquisición de conocimiento.</p>	<p>Encuestas formales-proyecto ATI-NITA/Sistema de seguimiento</p> <p>Formularios de evaluación actividades formativas</p>	<p>El personal beneficiario no se ve sometido a una sobrecarga de trabajo</p> <p>Se cuenta con la disponibilidad de los expertos/as de mayor calidad</p>

	implementación y monitoreo en las áreas de desarrollo productivo, educación para el empleo y cambio climático.			
R2	Fortalecidas las capacidades de la Unión Europea, sociedad civil y otras instituciones vinculadas a la implementación del MIP 2014-2020 en sus procesos de identificación, formulación e implementación, integrando el enfoque de género	<p>I.R.2.1 A la finalización del primer año de ejecución, el 80% del personal beneficiario de ATINITA manifiesta la utilidad de la asistencia técnica en el desempeño de su trabajo.</p> <p>I.R.2.2 A la finalización del primer año de ejecución, el 80% del personal participante en acciones formativas ha superado las evaluaciones de adquisición de conocimiento.</p> <p>I.R.2.3 A la finalización del proyecto, el 90% del personal técnico de la UE ha recibido formación sobre la incorporación del enfoque de género y al menos el 80% ha reportado cambios en sus métodos de trabajo.</p>	<p>Encuestas formales-proyecto ATINITA/Sistema de seguimiento</p> <p>Formularios de evaluación actividades formativas</p> <p>Encuestas formales-proyecto ATINITA/Sistema de seguimiento</p> <p>Informe de Seguimiento Plan de Acción de Género-DUE</p>	El personal beneficiario no se ve sometido a una sobrecarga de trabajo
ACCIÓN-PRODUCTOS	ACTIVIDADES GENERALES	INDICADORES DE GESTIÓN-OUTPUTS (primer año de ejecución-productos mínimos)		
A.1.1	Asesoramiento al GdN en cuanto a la formulación, implementación y monitoreo de políticas públicas principalmente en los sectores del MIP 2014-2020	<p>10 informes con recomendaciones de formulación</p> <p>8 informes con recomendaciones de gestión</p> <p>4 productos especializados de misiones de corto plazo</p> <p>2 herramientas de gestión diseñadas</p> <p>2 informes sobre procesos de gestión del conocimiento</p>		
A.2.1	Desarrollo de mecanismos, instrumentos y competencias para alcanzar un impacto positivo en la implementación de los proyectos (identificación, formulación e implementación) de la Unión Europea y reportar adecuadamente sobre ellos, en el Marco de Resultados de la Unión Europea, particularmente los proyectos en los sectores del MIP 2014-2020	<p>6 acciones formativas DUE</p> <p>2 acciones formativas a sociedad civil</p> <p>2 seminarios de intercambio de experiencias</p> <p>1 sistema de seguimiento</p> <p>6 reuniones de mesas de coordinación sectoriales</p> <p>20 informes con recomendaciones técnicas</p> <p>10 publicaciones en plataforma de conocimiento</p> <p>2 herramientas de mejora de la calidad de los procesos de gestión de proyectos</p> <p>4 informes de seguimiento ATI NITA</p>		
A.2.2	Apoyo a una correcta incorporación del enfoque de género en la cooperación de la UE en Nicaragua, en línea con el Plan de Acción de Género 2016-2020	<p>3 talleres formativos</p> <p>5 informes con recomendaciones de transversalización</p> <p>1 estudio especializado de género</p> <p>3 reuniones de seguimiento PAG</p>		
A.2.3	Acompañar el proceso de implementación de la Programación Conjunta	<p>1 informe de aportes al proceso</p> <p>2 reuniones de seguimiento al proceso</p>		

ANNEX II: THE EVALUATION CRITERIA

The definition and the number of the DAC evaluation criteria has changed following the release (10 December 2019) of the document “Evaluation Criteria: Adapted Definitions and Principles for Use” (DCD/DAC(2019)58/FINAL).

The evaluators will ensure that their analysis respects the new definitions of these criteria, their explanatory notes and the guidance document. These can be found at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Unless otherwise specified in chapter 2.2.1, the evaluation will assess the intervention using the six standard DAC evaluation criteria and the EU added value, which is a specific EU evaluation criterion. Their short definitions are reported below:

DAC CRITERIA

- **Relevance:** the “extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.”
- **Coherence:** the “compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.”
- **Effectiveness:** the “extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.”
- **Efficiency:** the “extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.”
- **Impact:** the “extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.”
- **Sustainability:** the “extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.”

EU-SPECIFIC CRITERION

- **EU added value:** the extent to which the intervention brings additional benefits to what would have resulted from Member States' interventions only in the partner country. It directly stems from the principle of subsidiarity defined in the Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>).

ANNEX III: INFORMATION THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE EVALUATION TEAM

The following is an indicative list of the documents that the Contracting Authority will make available to the selected evaluators shortly after the contract signature:

- legal texts and political commitments pertaining to the intervention(s) to be evaluated;
- Country Strategy Paper and Indicative Programmes (and equivalent) for the periods covered;
- relevant national/sector policies and plans from National and Local partners and other donors;
- intervention identification studies;
- intervention feasibility/formulation studies;
- intervention financing agreement and addenda;
- intervention's quarterly and annual progress reports, and technical reports;
- European Commission's Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Reports, and other external and internal monitoring reports of the intervention;
- intervention's mid-term evaluation report and other relevant evaluations, audit, reports;
- relevant documentation from national/local partners and other donors;
- guidance for gender sensitive evaluations;
- calendar and minutes of all the meeting of the Steering Committee of the intervention(s);
- any other relevant document.

Note: The evaluation team has to identify and obtain any other document worth analysing, through independent research and during interviews with relevant informed parties and stakeholders of the intervention.

ANNEX IV: THE EVALUATION MATRIX

The evaluation matrix (hereinafter: the matrix) will accompany the whole evaluation by summarising its **methodological design (Part A)**, to be filled and included in the Inception Report) and **documenting the evidence analysed** to answer each EQ (Part B)

The full matrix (parts A and B) is to be included in the following reports.

Use one set of tables (Parts A and B) for each Evaluation Question (EQ) and add or delete as many rows as needed to reflect the selected judgement criteria and indicators. Delete the guidance and the footnotes when including the matrix in the reports.

PART A – Evaluation design

EQ1: "XX?"				
Evaluation criteria covered ¹²				
Judgement criteria (JC) ¹³	Indicators (Ind) ¹⁴	Information sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 1.1 -	I 1.1.1 -			
	I 1.1.2 -			
	I 1.1.3 -			
JC 1.2 -	I 1.2.1 -			
	I 1.2.2 -			
	I 1.2.3 -			
JC 1.3 -	I 1.3.1 -			
	I 1.3.2 -			
	I 1.3.3 -			

¹² What evaluation criterion/criteria is/are addressed by this EQ?

¹³ Describe each selected JC and number them as illustrated in the template; the first numeric value represents the EQ the JC refers to.

¹⁴ As above. The two first numeric values represent the JC the indicators refer to. The number of JC and indicators per JC as reported in the table is purely illustrative. The table is to be adapted to your specific evaluation and reflect the appropriate JCs and indicators.

PART B – Evidence log

Ind ¹⁵	Baseline data ¹⁶	Evidence gathered/analysed	Quality of evidence ¹⁷
1.1.1			
1.1.2			
1.1.3			
1.2.1			
1.2.2			
1.3.1			

¹⁵ Use the same numbering as in Part A; no need to describe the indicators.

¹⁶ In case they are available. This column can also be used to record mid-term data (if available).

¹⁷ Score as follows: 0 (no evidence), 1 (some evidence), 2 (sufficient evidence), 3 (conclusive evidence)

ANNEX V: STRUCTURE OF THE REPORTS

1. INCEPTION REPORT (to be delivered at the end of the Inception phase)

The format of the Inception Report is free and should have a maximum length of 20 pages excluding annexes; it must contain at least the following:

- Introduction Short description of the context of the evaluation, its objectives and focus
- Reconstructed Intervention Logic This will be based on initial analysis of secondary sources and consultation with key stakeholders
- Stakeholder map Free format; this will represent the key stakeholders of the intervention(s) under evaluation and their relations with the intervention(s)
- Finalised Evaluation Questions with Judgement criteria and indicators (Evaluation Matrix, part A) See the template
- Methodology of the evaluation This will include:
 - Overview of entire evaluation process and tools
 - Consultation strategy
 - Case studies
 - Approach to the following phase of the evaluation, including planning of the missions
- Analysis of risks related to the evaluation methodology and mitigation measures In tabular, free format
- Ethics rules Including, but not limited to, avoiding harm and conflict of interest, informed consents, confidentiality and awareness of local governance and regulations
- Work plan This will include a free text description of the plans and their representation in Gantt format

2. DESK/INTERIM REPORT (to be delivered at the end of the desk activities)

The format of the Desk Report is free and should have a maximum length of 15 pages excluding annexes; it must contain at least the following:

- Introduction
- Background and key methodological elements With indication of:

- Overall evaluation approach
 - Desk activities:
 - Data collection and analyses
 - Overview of tools and techniques used
 - Challenges and limitations
- Preliminary findings
 - Preliminary answers to each EQ, with indication (in a tabular form) of the hypotheses to be tested in the field and information gaps
 - Main annexes
 - Preliminary answers by judgement criteria
 - Updated evaluation matrix (Part A + Part B)

3. DRAFT FINAL REPORT AND FINAL REPORT (to be delivered at the end of the Synthesis phase)

The Draft Final and the Final Report have the same structure, format and content. They should be consistent, concise and clear and free of linguistic errors both in the original version and in their translation, if foreseen. The Final Report should not be longer than 40 pages excluding annexes. The presentation must be properly spaced, and the use of clear graphs, tables and short paragraphs is strongly recommended.

The cover page of the Final Report should carry the following text:

“This evaluation is supported and guided by the European Commission and presented by [name of consulting firm]. The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Commission”.

The main sections of the evaluation report should be as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Executive Summary | The Executive Summary is expected to highlight the evaluation purpose, the methods used, the main evaluation findings and the conclusions and recommendations. It is to be considered a “stand alone” document. |
| 1. Introduction | A description of the intervention, of the relevant country/region/sector background and of the evaluation, providing the reader with sufficient methodological explanations to gauge the credibility of the conclusions and to acknowledge limitations or weaknesses, where relevant. |
| 2. Findings | A chapter presenting the answers to the Evaluation Question headings, supported by evidence and reasoning. Findings per judgement criteria and detailed evidence per indicator are included in an annex to the Report. |
| 3. Overall assessment (optional) | A chapter synthesising all answers to Evaluation Questions into an overall assessment of the intervention. The detailed structure of the overall assessment should be refined during the evaluation process. The relevant chapter has to articulate all the findings, conclusions and lessons in a way that reflects their importance and facilitates the reading. The structure |

should not follow the Evaluation Questions, the logical framework or the evaluation criteria.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt generalise findings and translate past experience into relevant knowledge that should support decision making, improve performance and promote the achievement of better results. Ideally, they should support the work of both the relevant European and partner institutions.

4.2 Conclusions

This chapter contains the conclusions of the evaluation, organised per evaluation criterion.

In order to allow better communication of the evaluation messages that are addressed to the Commission, a table organising the conclusions by order of importance can be presented, or a paragraph or sub-chapter emphasising the three or four major conclusions organised by order of importance, while avoiding being repetitive.

4.3 Recommendations

They are intended to improve or reform the intervention in the framework of the cycle underway, or to prepare the design of a new intervention for the next cycle.

Recommendations must be clustered and prioritised, and carefully targeted to the appropriate audiences at all levels, especially within the Commission structure.

5. Annexes to the report

The report should include the following annexes:

- Terms of Reference of the evaluation;
- names of the evaluators (CVs can be shown, but summarised and limited to one page per person);
- detailed evaluation methodology including: the evaluation matrix; options taken; difficulties encountered and limitations; detail of tools and analyses;
- detailed answer by judgement criteria;
- evaluation matrix with data gathered and analysed by (EQ/JC) indicator;
- Intervention Logic/Logical Framework matrices (planned/real and improved/updated);
- relevant geographic map(s) where the intervention took place;
- list of persons/organisations consulted;
- literature and documentation consulted;

- other technical annexes (e.g. statistical analyses, tables of contents and figures, matrix of evidence, databases) as relevant.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (EVAL Module)

An Executive Summary is to be prepared using the specific format foreseen in the EVAL Module. Its format will be available to evaluators at the time of the submission through EVAL of the Final Report. This is additional to the request to prepare a self-standing executive summary to be included in the Final Report (please refer to the paragraph above, detailing the content of the Final Report).

ANNEX VI: PLANNING SCHEDULE

This annex must be included by framework contractors in their specific contract Organisation and Methodology and forms an integral part of it.

Framework contractors can add as many rows and columns as needed.

The phases of the evaluation should reflect those indicated in the present Terms of Reference.

		Indicative Duration in working days ¹⁸		
Activity	Location	Team Leader	Evaluator	Indicative Dates
Inception phase: total days				
•				
•				
Desk phase: total days				
•				
•				
Field phase: total days				
•				
•				
Synthesis phase: total days				
•				
•				
Dissemination phase: total days				
•				
•				
TOTAL working days (maximum)				

¹⁸ Add one column per each evaluator

ANNEX VII: EVAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRID

The quality of the Final Report will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager (following the submission of the draft Report and Executive Summary) using the following quality assessment grid, which is included in the **EVAL Module**; the grid will be shared with the evaluation team, who will be able to include their comments.

Intervention (Project/Programme) evaluation – Quality Assessment Grid Final Report

Evaluation data			
Evaluation title			
Evaluation managed by		Type of evaluation	
Ref. of the evaluation contract		EVAL ref.	
Evaluation budget			
EUD/Unit in charge		Evaluation Manager	
Evaluation dates	Start:		End:
Date of draft final report		Date of Response of the Services	
Comments			
Project data			
Main project evaluated			
CRIS/OPSYS # of evaluated project(s)			
DAC Sector			
Contractor's details			
Evaluation Team Leader		Evaluation Contractor	
Evaluation expert(s)			

Legend: scores and their meaning

Very satisfactory: criterion entirely fulfilled in a clear and appropriate way

Satisfactory: criterion fulfilled

Unsatisfactory: criterion partly fulfilled

Very unsatisfactory: criterion mostly not fulfilled or absent

The evaluation report is assessed as follows

1. Clarity of the report

This criterion analyses the extent to which both the Executive Summary and the Final Report:

- are easily readable, understandable and accessible to the relevant target readers;
- highlight the key messages;
- have various chapters and annexes well balanced in length;
- contain relevant graphs, tables and charts facilitating understanding;
- contain a list of acronyms (only the Report);
- avoid unnecessary duplications;
- have been language checked for unclear formulations, misspelling and grammar errors.
- The Executive Summary is an appropriate summary of the full report and is a free-standing document.



Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

2. Reliability of data and robustness of evidence

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- data/evidence was gathered as defined in the methodology;
- the report considers, when relevant, evidence from EU and/or other partners' relevant studies, monitoring reports and/or evaluations;
- the report contains a clear description of the limitations of the evidence, the risks of bias and the mitigating measures.



Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

3. Validity of Findings

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- findings derive from the evidence gathered;
- findings address all selected evaluation criteria;
- findings result from an appropriate triangulation of different, clearly identified sources;
- when assessing the effect of the EU intervention, the findings describe and explain the most relevant cause/effect links between outputs, outcomes and impacts;



- the analysis of evidence is comprehensive and takes into consideration contextual and external factors.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

4. Validity of conclusions

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- conclusions are logically linked to the findings, and go beyond them to provide a comprehensive analysis;
- conclusions appropriately address the selected evaluation criteria and all the Evaluation Questions, including the relevant cross-cutting dimensions;
- conclusions take into consideration the various stakeholder groups of the evaluation;
- conclusions are coherent and balanced (i.e. they present a credible picture of both strengths and weaknesses), and are free of personal or partisan considerations;
- (if relevant) the report indicates when there are not sufficient findings to conclude on specific issues



Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

5. Usefulness of recommendations

This criterion analyses the extent to which the recommendations:

- are clearly linked to and derive from the conclusions;
- are concrete, achievable and realistic;
- are targeted to specific addressees;
- are clustered (if relevant), prioritised, and possibly time-bound;
- (if relevant) provide advice for the intervention's exit strategy, post-intervention sustainability or for adjusting the intervention's design or plans.



Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

6. Appropriateness of lessons learnt analysis (if requested by the ToR or included by the evaluators)

This criterion is to be assessed only when requested by the ToR or included by evaluators and is not to be scored. It analyses the extent to which:



- lessons are identified;
- where relevant, they are generalised in terms of wider relevance for the institution(s).

Strengths		Weaknesses	
Contractor's comments		Contractor's comments	
Final comments on the overall quality of the report			Overall score

TERMS OF REFERENCE – PART B

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Benefitting Zone

Nicaragua

2. Contracting authority

The European Union, represented by the European Commission, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

3. Contract language

English

LOCATION AND DURATION

4. Location

- **Expert :**
 - Normal place of posting of the specific assignment: Home Based
 - Mission(s) outside the normal place of posting and duration(s): None
- **Team Leader:**
 - Normal place of posting of the specific assignment: Home based
 - Mission(s) outside the normal place of posting and duration(s): None

5. Start date and period of implementation

The indicative start date is 01/03/2022 and the period of implementation of the contract will be 45 days from this date (indicative end date: 15/04/2022).

REQUIREMENTS

6. Expertise

For this assignment, one individual expert must be proposed for each position.

The expertise required for the implementation of the specific contract is detailed below.

- **Expert :**
 - General description of the position: Expert Cat II
 - Expert category: Cat. II (>6 years of experience)
 - Qualifications and skills required: University degree in Journalism, Communication Sciences, Social Communication, preferably with a specialization in social

communication for sustainable development or related fields; or equivalent experience with knowledge of topics which: design and implementation of communication strategies and plans.

- General professional experience: Minimum 6 years of experience related to execution, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects. Minimum 2 final evaluations of international cooperation in particular financed by the European Union
 - Specific professional experience: Expertise in evaluation, knowledge of EU programming and supporting schemes. Experience in communicational support in scenarios for different audiences
 - Language skills: Excellent command of Spanish and English
 - Minimum number of working days: **30** days
 - Additional information: Knowledge of gender and intercultural approaches. Excellent report writing skills.
- **Team Leader:**
 - General description of the position: Expert Cat I
 - Expert category: Cat. I (>12 years of experience)
 - Qualifications and skills required: Professional with a university degree with a minimum level of master's degree in social sciences in social sciences and or development cooperation. Minimum 12 years of experience related to execution, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects.
 - General professional experience: Minimum 3 final evaluations of international cooperation in particular financed by the European Union
 - Specific professional experience: Expertise in evaluation, knowledge of EU programming and supporting schemes. Relevant experience with government agencies, non-governmental organizations and / or in large-scale or international cooperation projects
 - Language skills: Excellent command of Spanish and English
 - Minimum number of working days: **40** days
 - Additional information: Knowledge of gender and intercultural approaches. Excellent report writing skills.

7. Incidental expenditure

No incidental expenditure provided for in this contract.

8. Lump sums

No lump sums provided for in this contract.

9. Expenditure verification

No expenditure verification report is required.

10. Other details

No other details provided for in this contract.

REPORTS AND DELIVERABLES

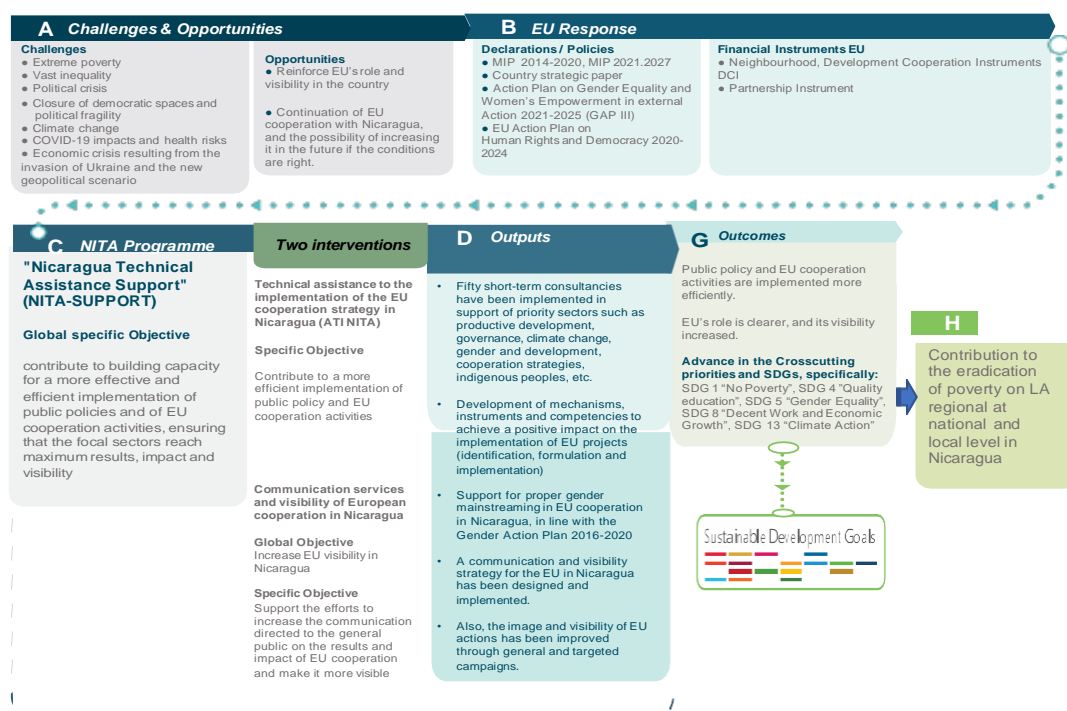
11. Reports and deliverables requirements

Title	Content	Language	Submission timing or deadline
Project WorkPlan		Spanish	Within 3 Day(s) After the project start
Draft final report		English	Within 30 Day(s) After the project start
Final report		English	Within 40 Day(s) After the project start

Annex 3: Summary of the evaluation methodology

Our methodology approach is based on a **systematic analysis** of the two interventions. This implies taking into account context-specific factors in which each intervention operates and requires analysis of the observed results regarding the sphere of the projects influence and the external environment. To understand the causal path and to track change levels, the team uses the intervention logic as the core of the analytical framework (Figure below).

NITA Intervention Logic



The evaluation matrix formed with refined Evaluation Questions (EQ), Judgment Criteria (JC) and indicators is the main guiding tool for data collection and analysis. The evaluation adopts a systematic approach that uses different "building blocks" or "stages" to gradually construct an answer to the EQs and to formulate key conclusions and forward-looking recommendations. The first block of preliminary answers to the EQs defined with regard to the intervention of ATI NITA and EU communication and visibility services in Nicaragua is presented here. These preliminary answers were reviewed in detail and confronted with new evidence in order to obtain the definitive answers to each question and DAC evaluation criterion, in the synthesis phase and will be presented in the final report.

In the desk phase, a range of methods and tools were used to collect the data necessary to assess a given JC. The combination of data collection methods/tools and sources of information varied depending on the different JCs. The Evaluation Team combined sources of information and, where possible, the use of qualitative and quantitative data and rely both on primary and secondary data sources, while taking into account resource and time limitations. During the desk phase, the Evaluation Team checked that the final sources and set of methods/tools constituted a sufficiently broad mix to ensure a high level of data reliability and validity of conclusions. The purpose of such an approach is to strengthen the reliability of data, improve the validity of the findings and recommendations, and broaden and deepen our understanding of the processes through which outcomes and impacts are achieved. The

Annex 4: Detailed answers by judgement criteria

EQ 1: To what extent were the interventions relevant at the time of their contracting and to what extent did they remain relevant throughout implementation?

Three elements are important to consider in assessing the relevance of a cooperation intervention: firstly, coherence with the real needs and the objective context of the beneficiary groups, that is, that the intervention is oriented towards solving real needs for what was designed; secondly, alignment with the EU policy framework, expressed in its national and regional documents; and thirdly, alignment with the political framework of the country, expressed in its strategic documents.

- With regard to the first point, there has been no fundamental change in the number of beneficiary groups in any of the interventions, but there has been a change in the relative weight of the actions allocated to each. Reducing in practice the actions of government support and increasing those of support to the EU's own delegation in Nicaragua and to civil society organisations (very evident in the case of ATI NITA). However, this shift in emphasis has not undermined the coherence of interventions (what was designed) with the needs of these groups. Moreover, the need to support the capacities of government institutions related to the productive sector, training for employment and environmental protection, as well as EUD in the sectors of the MIP 2014-2020, is, if possible, more important than before.
- Taking into account the key EU documents in the country (the CSP, the MIP 2014-2020), and during the life cycle of both interventions, the high alignment of the objectives of both with the sectors prioritized in the MIP and the CSP has not been modified. In the case of the 2021-2027 MIP, there is a change of priority sectors, for instance, education for employment has not been found while climate change and inclusive economic growth have been found³¹. However, support for cross-cutting sectors such as gender, human rights, indigenous peoples was already seen as important for the EU framework. In this way it can be inferred that EU support responded to the needs and challenges of the country.
- Regarding the governmental political framework, at the formal and discourse level there has been no significant modification, continuing the NDP 2012-2016, Commitments of Good Governance 2017-2021, and National Human Development Agenda (2018-2021) as key and strategic documents. Let us remember that the two interventions are aligned with the objectives of human development.

Taking into account these three elements, it is possible to point out that the high relevance of the two interventions has not changed fundamentally since their respective implementation period started and as a consequence of the political-social crisis that the country is experiencing. There is indeed a greater emphasis on target groups towards the EU Delegation and civil society organisations related to the sectors prioritized in the MIP and the cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, indigenous peoples, etc.), but this was already considered in the original design.

EQ 2: To what extent the interventions represented and still represent an adequate response to the needs and rights of the target groups and end beneficiaries?

³¹Republic of Nicaragua, Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. European Commission, 2020.

First, in both interventions there has been no fundamental change of beneficiary groups. Only in the second intervention, the EU's communication and visibility services in Nicaragua changed 1 of the four interest groups, adding Nicaraguan citizens and making women a more explicit target group³², but it cannot be indicated that it is a fundamental change. For its part, ATI NITA has not modified its stakeholders from design to implementation.

On the other hand, the ultimate goal of capacity-building projects is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of government interventions by increasing, modernizing and consolidating capacities in the design, formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes. This through technical assistance to solve specific difficulties, systematic training, carrying out studies for decision-making, exchange of experiences and good practices, among others.

ATI NITA as a traditional capacity building project sought to dynamize the implementation of interventions within the MIP through supporting the increase of capacities of government counterparts in the productive sector (agriculture and agro-industry), training for employment and climate change. The EU's communication and visibility services in Nicaragua focused on implementing a systematic EU communication strategy in the country in order to position the EU as a relevant actor in Nicaragua's development, communicate the benefits of its cooperation and its impact on people's lives, and improve the EU's position as a promoter of solidarity, prosperity, peace and human rights. Both interventions responded to structural needs, which to date remain unresolved, as the capacities of many government counterparts, rather than being strengthened, have been weakened, and **the positioning of the EU as a development actor needs to be further strengthened** (either by disinformation polarization or smear campaigns). This is because the needs remain present, and are even more urgent, and the interventions still represent an adequate response to the structural needs and rights of the target groups.

An important point is to emphasize that the temporary situation does not obviate the need for structural changes, even more so it makes them more urgent. If the political-social crisis would be resolved tomorrow's future, it will be necessary to implement ATI NITA II and EU communication and visibility services in Nicaragua II.

EQ 3: Is the choice of IP/method of implementation proving to be appropriate in comparison with other options?

In relation to the method of implementation by direct management of the EUD, it is controversial, since on the one hand it has offered flexibility and adaptability to the two interventions in the face of the various challenges they have encountered in their life cycles (political and social crisis, Covid-19 pandemic, polarized electoral cycle, 2 hurricanes, etc.). At any given event, a tacit crisis committee (made up of the project coordinator, the ATI/ITA and the head of the related thematic unit or head of cooperation) was quickly formed, which allowed it to make decisions and carry them out.

³²The audiences of interest in the 2018-2020 communication strategy consisted of: Young people from schools and universities; opinion leaders and decision makers; editors, journalists, bloggers and digital influencers; and partners and beneficiaries of cooperation projects. On the other hand, the communication strategy reviewed and approved consists of Nicaraguan citizens, young people and women; journalists and influencers; opinion leaders; and strategic partners.

Likewise, the direct management by the UED has ensured a control of the interventions, its activities and dynamics that have allowed it to respond in a conjunctural way to the new situation, responding to the greater sensitivity (of messages, actions and even communications) and the low profile adopted by the Delegation, to maintain the delicate balance in its situation in the country.

Therefore, **the cooperation project is not the ideal instrument to respond to short-term contingencies that demands rapid response**. Continuously forcing the two interventions into this situation, and especially ATI NITA, has in some way led to the denaturation of the mission for which they were conceived, the establishment of a short-term crisis management concept (which needed the resources already), which had an impact on the quality of the services provided, as well as on the reduction of the mission days of the short-term experts (30% of the missions were less than 10 days long in ATI NITA). In addition, since there was no local representation of backstopping in the case of ATI NITA, this delayed the follow-up of the decisions taken, creating a bottleneck in the selection of short-term experts (which was officially pointed out by the delegation itself).

It is important in view of the recommendations for the new programme, to contrast other possible ways of implementation, such as **management by delegated cooperation**, which would have implied more autonomy to the interventions for their development. To this end, it is important to investigate the development of statistical contracts managed by the IDB and the possibility of collecting information and interviewing those in charge.

An important element to consider concerns the design of interventions focused on the figure of a main expert, who performs administrative and coordination functions of short-term missions, without the accompaniment of long-term experts specialized in thematic areas (for example, climate, productive sector or training). At this point, we have the example of the two cases in the evaluated interventions: on the one hand, in ATI NITA the same long-term expert has been maintained throughout the period, but which has led to an overload of work and functions (to the administrative and coordination functions, those of expert in gender have been added). On the other hand, in the second intervention, the overload of work linked to the conditions of the context, explains the succession of three main experts³³.

It is necessary to evaluate in view of the recommendations, other forms of deployment in the field, such as thematic experts who accompany the whole period or a large part of it (2-3 years).

EQ4 To what extent were the implementation approaches adopted appropriate to pursue the development cooperation's objectives while creating synergies with other EU support and with the actions of EU MS and other donors?

ATI Nita support responds well to an approach to Development Cooperation that existed up to the first year of the project implementation. Demand based expertise on the basis of agreed thematic priorities under both a political and technical dialogue with the government.

However, since then, many changes have taken place both in the context of international cooperation (including new global commitments) and the EU approach in providing cooperation. The new Consensus (2017), the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as a policy driven instrument and the new policy priorities were born while both interventions were taking place, under a rather convoluted paradox. One could unfortunately argue that most of what characterizes the new EU approach, summarized here as "to make engagement with partners more strategic and responsive, building ever stronger and mutually beneficial partnerships based on shared interests", has been increasingly difficult to conduct through EU cooperation in the country, particularly with government counterparts.

³³Semi-Annual Progress Reports, Apple Tree.

What seems to characterize the approach of these two interventions, since 2018, is **reaction and risk management rather than the possibility to consolidate the dialogue and partnership with the government**. Despite the fact that the relationship between the EU and the sub-region was modeled through the Dialogue of San José (starting in 1984) to establish a channel for political dialogue in and between the countries to support peace and democracy, and that expanded into many other issues, such as economic and social development, the EU and its decreasing number of member states present in the country, are finding it difficult to remain as a key partner for development. Unfortunately, it looks like that state of affairs will persist during the next years. In fact, the big scope for wider collaboration between donors, particularly European partners, and the logical convergence between bilateral, sub-regional and regional programmes, works best under a common platform led by governments, where demand and supply meet, and where coordination is facilitated by national institutions. In the absence of that, it is likely that the EU added value will continue to focus on supporting particular areas (e.g., environment, gender, rural development), being able to provide an expertise that is very close to its priorities and value system, and building on the possibilities offered by joint programming and the Team Europe approach as a way of working better together at country level. That is reflected in the experience in both projects:

- In both projects EU MS have contributed in different capacities to serve common objectives.
- In both projects the EU has reached out to a diverse array of development partners, including EU MS technical agencies.
- In both projects the EU is contributing with its long experience and testing the possibility of synergies with other EU initiatives at regional level.

While that is the case, an important question that both projects will need to tackle is how to live up to the new more assertive, "transformative" and policy oriented spirit that guides the ambitions of EU development efforts worldwide with an immediate scenario of democratic regression and institutional deterioration.

EQ 5: To what extent were outputs delivered on time and to what extent were they of the expected quality?

The two interventions have encountered delays and difficulties in several activities implemented, as well as problems regarding the quality of the products and the quality of the experts hired.

ATI NITA has had to cancel 16 missions (18 per cent of the total), mainly because its counterpart was governmental (MIFIC, ENATREL and MHCP), because the team could not be completed and because of difficulties in the quality of the experts selected. The missions involved studies and formulation in the sectors of climate change, the productive sector, poverty statistics and indigenous peoples³⁴. The second intervention had to cancel about more than 25 activities both because of security problems UED to the current political crisis and for sanitary and health reasons in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic³⁵.

However, despite the difficulties and challenges faced, **the two interventions have succeeded in meeting targets and delivering most of the committed outputs**.

³⁴ATI NITA, Mission Control, June 2022.

³⁵These activities do not necessarily respond to short-term missions. Semi-Annual Progress Reports, Apple Tree.

ATI NITA has executed and/or is completing 42 short-term missions, especially in the gender sectors, climate change (18%), and poverty statistics.

The second intervention launched the EU communication strategy in Nicaragua in February 2019, maintaining 8 axes of activities: Storytelling and story doing campaigns oriented to the general public; "tell me about Europe" to primary school students; "Confluencias/Confluences" aimed at communication students and influencers in social networks at the UCA; "Club Erasmus Nicaragua" oriented to students/entrepreneurs/universities; European days for development, aimed at young entrepreneurs; permanent monitoring office and generation of success stories for the EUD website; and promotion of EU values through art and culture oriented to the general public with celebrations of Human Rights Day, International Women's Day and Europe Day, among others. Apple Tree, in close coordination with the UED, has carried out activities in each of these axes since its launch, despite the fact that, as we mentioned, many were canceled because of risks for citizens' security derived from the political crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

EQ 6: Did the interventions achieve their expected results at the outcome level, in relation to their respective reworded objectives and present in each ToR?

Taking into account the ToR and especially their specific objectives, it is possible to point out that the two interventions have **faced great difficulties that limit the overall achievement of the expected outputs.**

In the first place, ATI NITA had as specific objectives the *strengthening of the capacities of ministries, decentralized entities and other institutions linked to the implementation of the CSP for Nicaragua, especially in relation to the three priority areas (productive sector, effective education for employment, adaptation to climate change); as well as the promotion of European cooperation to achieve maximum results and impact, integrating the gender approach and ensuring correct reporting based on objective and quantifiable data*³⁶. Of these two objectives, the first has practically remained on stand-by since the beginning of 2018 (which in addition to being the most important, is the one that gave content to the entire project), and in relation to the sectors, climate change has been supported much more than the productive and education sectors, which has been marginal (only 2.7% of the missions correspond to each of these sectors two last sectors). For its part, the second objective is the one that has been most supported, in its gender aspect, both in terms of training, studies, curriculum, statistics and publications, but related to civil society organisations, not government entities.

In this way, and considering both aspects, it is possible to infer that, UED to the reduced input made in the areas of influence of the specific objectives, **the expected products of ATI NITA are difficult to carry out.**

With regard to the second intervention, the specific objectives relate to the results of: *increasing the EU's visibility, positioning it as a relevant actor in Nicaragua's development; communicating the benefits of EU cooperation and its impact on people's lives; and increasing the European Union's position as a promoter of solidarity, prosperity, peace and human rights.* In each of these axes, the intervention has developed various actions that have contributed to each of these ends, however the difficulties faced (first the political crisis, then Covid-19, then the electoral cycle), the high polarization resulting

³⁶TOR ATI NITA, January 15, 2016, UED Nicaragua, pp. 5.

from the positioning of the EU in favor of human rights, dialogue and peace, as well as the decision of the UED to adopt a low-profile level, have reduced the realization of the expected products.

It is also interesting to carry out an analysis taking into account the general objective, that is the impact, which corresponds to that of the financing agreement, which consisted of: *The programme contributes to the national objective of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the promotion of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.*

Despite the fact that no statistical information is available in this regard, since neither of the two interventions designed and maintained statistics that would allow it (creating a baseline of comparison, or specific KPIs for the MDGs or for the fight against poverty), it is **possible to indicate that the expected impact of the two interventions on the overall objective will be very limited.**

EQ 7: To what extent have the priorities identified in the Communication Strategy 2018-20 been implemented, and with what results?

In the 2018-20 Communication Strategy document, the general objective is to position the EU in the Nicaraguan public as a key actor for a better world through projects and programmes implemented in the country. Its specific objectives are *to raise awareness of the EU as the world's largest donor of development aid; to increase awareness of the EU's support to Nicaragua, through its 2014-2020 cooperation programme and how it impacts on the lives of the beneficiaries; to make the EU visible as one of the world's leading trading powers, providing Nicaraguans with unique economic and investment opportunities in the European market; and to promote the diversity, values and cultural wealth of the EU among the Nicaraguan public.* The corresponding audiences of interest are: Young people from colleges and universities; opinion leaders and decision makers; editors, journalists, bloggers and digital influencers; and partners and beneficiaries of cooperation projects³⁷.

It is not surprising that the EU's greater visibility in the period evaluated in the country, results from its political positioning and not from its technical cooperation actions. From the outset, the EU was in favor of dialogue and negotiation between the parties, peace and respect for human rights, which earned it actions of repudiation by government agents, as well as disinformation campaigns and frontal attack. Despite this, the EU has achieved notoriety, not only at local and regional level, but also at international level. This could not be achieved even with the best communication strategy in the world.

However, with regard to its cooperation actions, these have been reduced to a minimum UED to the consequences of adverse factors (political crisis, Covid-19 and electoral cycle), thus modifying their effects and their interrelationships with other initiatives. That is, reducing the content of the actions to be disseminated.

All this was further limited by the decision to maintain a low political profile of the EUD, which led to a reduction in the dissemination actions to be carried out and greater control of them by the delegation's staff.

EQ 8: What elements played in favor or against the achievement of results?

³⁷Communication strategy 2018-2020, European Union – Nicaragua, 2017.

As noted above, the two interventions have faced major challenges in the evaluation period:

- First of all, the political and social crises initiated with the anti-government revolts of April 2018, which implied a process of escalation of social and political polarization, which has affected both the ATI NITA (eliminating in practice the counterpart and what that means for a capacity building project), as well as the second intervention (which did not even begin to apply the communication strategy approved previously), being forced at the outset to modify and update the EU communication strategy in Nicaragua.
- The method of implementation, by direct management by the UED, played a double game: on the one hand, it allowed greater flexibility by being able to quickly form a crisis committee formed by the linked representatives of the EUD and the TA; but at the same time, it implied a greater restriction of the actions to be carried out UED to the institutional decisions adopted that affected both interventions (low profile level, communication and security protocols, etc.). This process created a tendency towards short-termism and prolonging the contingency responses of both interventions, which **distorted the essence of the cooperation interventions** themselves. This was expressed in the tendency to launch short-term missions.
- Consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the economic ones and the mobility restrictions entailed for months (confinement, perimeter restrictions, etc.) affected both interventions, cancelling several activities and forcing to reorient resources to monitor their evolution and campaigns to disseminate hygiene and control standards.
- Electoral cycle derived from the presidential elections of November 2021 and especially from their results, in a context of non-resolution of the political crisis of April 2018. This entailed a process of greater socio-political polarization, and the EU's greater positioning by not recognizing the results of the elections, and positioning itself again in favor of the negotiation and establishment of country agreements. As a result of this polarization, more than 285 NGOs, foundations and civil society entities (including ecclesiastics) have been outlawed and exiled, which further reduced the field of activity of the 2 interventions that had prioritized work with many of these organisations as an alternative to the closure of government counterparts.

Finally, as elements in favor, we should mention the decision and commitment of the EUD to carry out the two interventions, and even to consider their continuity in the new programming. As well as the commitment of technical assistance to follow (especially ATI NITA).

In the 2018-20 Communication Strategy document, the general objective is to position the EU in the Nicaraguan public as a key actor for a better world through projects and programmes implemented in the country. Its specific objectives are *to raise awareness of the EU as the world's largest donor of development aid; to increase awareness of the EU's support to Nicaragua, through its 2014-2020 cooperation programme and how it impacts on the lives of the beneficiaries; to make the EU visible as one of the world's leading trading powers, providing Nicaraguans with unique economic and investment opportunities in the European market; and to promote the diversity, values and cultural wealth of the EU among the Nicaraguan public*. The corresponding audiences of interest are: Young people from colleges and universities; opinion leaders and decision makers; editors, journalists, bloggers and digital influencers; and partners and beneficiaries of cooperation projects³⁸.

EQ 9: What are the perspectives of sustainability of the two interventions in terms of commitment of executors and beneficiaries, their capacity and in terms of financial resources?

³⁸Communication strategy 2018-2020, European Union – Nicaragua, 2017.

Both initiatives score differently in terms of sustainability.

- The sustainability of ATI-NITA broadly depends on restructuring the program and focusing on what is needed and viable, if possible paying attention to what has actually worked in this phase. ATI NITA was conceived as an instrument to support the planning and programming of the GoN. It was supported by a transversal EU financed, technical assistance to facilitate a structured and strategic capacity building process. A key part of that, to provide a continuous technical support and advice to government institutions is paused for the time being and it is not likely to change. While the strengthening of capacities is likely to continue, the number of difficulties faced raise many aspects (as indicated in the next bullet points) that challenge both commitment and capacity and directly affect the sustainability of the actions. The safest bet would be to continue working "within the proximity" of the UED , mainstreaming the gender approach and keep on supporting civil society organisations.
- Communication and visibility have meant a brand new "experiment" in terms of how the EU communicates. Sustainability relies primarily on continuing with the investment and maintaining the good working relationship between the EU and the implementers. UED to the highly sensitive situation in the country, essential conditions will also include constant monitoring of obstacles, learning from the impact of the different actions, analyzing the results, and focusing on what has worked.

In short, **the overall national context challenges sustainability**. Essential factors such as an institutional environment to continue with the services and results (including financial support) or a dialogue that provides a good degree of interaction between project and policy level are not present at the end of the implementation period. In the absence of those, there is a big question mark regarding the capacity or willingness of international or local partners to give continuity to the many initiatives under ATI NITA.

In the case of NITA, three key aspects define the options for sustainability. 1) The extent to which the political and technical dialogue with the government allows to launch lines of work in those areas of mutual interest. 2) The existing demand for the services of the contract and its relevance in relation to the needs of EU Technical Assistance in Nicaragua. 3) The execution capacity and commitment paired with the required adequate expertise. A number of aspects need to be reviewed:

- The risk of an extreme reliance on one person for the implementation of the contract (ATI NITA).
- The most adequate approach to give continuity to result 2: "Strengthened the capacities of the European Union, civil society and other institutions linked to the implementation of the MIP 2014-2020 in their processes of identification, formulation and implementation, integrating the gender approach".
- The viability of incorporating more strategic planning to improve the needs of coordination and monitoring and avoid potential problems of implementation, as long as the national context calls out for improvisation and flexibility to react to unpredictable circumstances.
- The availability and quality of the experts. Bearing in mind the importance of the expertise and the problems witnessed during these years, there are a number of aspects that could help the sustainability of the actions like, for example, any mean to improve the conditions to work in Nicaragua; increase the fees; a better balance between short- and long-term contracts; security aspects, etc.

In the case of Communication and Visibility, the implementation of the contract rightly incorporated a risk management approach, with permanent coordination between the apple tree communications team and EUD-NI officials. That is likely to remain as a central aspect for the coming years. But there are a number of important aspects in terms of sustainability:

- The values and principles upheld such as peace, human rights, diversity and democracy are the strongest asset in terms of sustainability.
- The difficulties faced in the dialogue with the government have been integrated into the modus operandi of the project and turned into a strength (resilience capacity) to be capitalised from, with many lessons learned.
- Consistent messages based on facts together with the (more active) participation of Team Europe is a very good combination for sustainability.
- The possibilities to continue exploring digital communication for increased impact and sustainability.

Last but not least, one essential area of sustainability is the existence of **strong alliances of actors committed to particular goals**. The consolidation of those ecosystems of actors is a very resilient form of combating challenges or limiting factors. ATI NITA has developed into a completely different form of what was originally planned. Communication and Visibility has gradually established good relations with a relevant universe of media outlets, journalists, schools, civil society organisations, etc with which the project will keep on cooperating in different activities.

EQ9a: Are realistic plans in place that involve the relevant stakeholders

1. One increasingly important area to promote sustainability is a better understanding of the dynamics of cooperation that can be designed among like-minded actors to encourage certain development goals. For that purpose, the **existence of strong alliances and the consolidation of ecosystems of actors** is a very resilient form of combating challenges or the type of limiting factors that we are witnessing in Nicaragua through these two projects.
2. For that purpose, it is increasingly common to use Stakeholder Maps and other managing tools in order to keep track of a various array of participating actors and their expectations. This is still not sufficiently applied on Development cooperation projects and this case is not an exception.
3. From the outset, both projects are meant to interact with a broad universe of actors, but both have evolved very differently.
4. ATI NITA, as often happens with the delivery of technical assistance with institutions of the partner country, outlined a strategy with the participation of a multitude of actors: legislative power and political parties, executive power and principals, ministries/vice-ministers/secretaries, planning entities, budget management and fiscal management, public officials, relevant agencies, technical institutes, statistical offices, unions / professional associations / chambers and federations, private sector associations, NGOs and other civil society groups, academia, research centers, think tanks, local authorities, international donors, etc. Unfortunately, the increasing difficulties to conduct a normalized dialogue with the government has made that universe of actors considerably smaller. The original set up, where the EU Delegation, accompanied by the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee, would gradually vertebrate the action, reaching out to a large variety of actors, depending on the agreed sectors (gender, climate change, etc.) and particular upcoming needs did not happen. Without their guidance and participation, the project has gradually depended on the capacity of the coordinator or the initiative, her team and the cooperation with the EUD.
5. In Communication and Visibility targeted objectives and audiences have been met (e.g. national authorities, international organisations, EU Member States, non-state actors). Once again the great challenge is how to sustain the relationships created, which should be part of the

consolidation of Communication and Visibility efforts during the next years at a time when many of those actors (media, schools, universities, LAs, etc) are struggling to remain active.

6. Regardless of the evolution of the projects, **the political context imposes many challenges that affect relevant actors**. Civil society organisations have already suffered a lot and, at the point of writing this desk report, it seems that local authorities are also being part of the attacks of the government. Interviews have helped the evaluation team notice how think tanks are virtually nonexistent anymore and even some of the small locations where activities (reading workshops) were taking place have been closed. All that rises a great question mark with respect to future steps and the best possible way in which different institutions, territories and beneficiaries can participate, contribute or engage in the activities of any of the two interventions.

EQ 9b: What is the expected financial impact of sustainability and are these resources available?

As mentioned in question 9, the potential of sustainability is strongly undermined when the institutional environment is not supportive, when the relationship between the project and the policy dimension does not work well and when all those limit the possibilities to give continuity to the results of the project through local (financial and human) resources. That is even worse when key stakeholders who were going to take over or simply continue with those face restrictions and obstacles. That resembles the current context in Nicaragua.

In both interventions the financial sustainability looks very unlikely. In the case of ATI-NITA, the economic and financial sustainability of the services provided is limited but needs to be assessed in relation to the wide variety of activities, actors and circumstances it targets. For example, those activities that concentrate on providing technical expertise on certain areas (e.g., generating statistics) are more likely to meet financial opportunities that guarantee their sustainability over time. Other areas, such as those linked to work with local authorities or NGOs will be less predictable and uncertain in relation to their future that might arise. But overall, the sustainability of ATI-NITA undoubtedly depends on the willingness of the EU to continue financing it or parts of it.

The case of Communication and Visibility is different because it is not a Development project as such, but rather the gradual professionalization of EU Communication by contracting specialists in the area. This is not something that is expected to be taken over by anyone else but rather part of the normal activity that any organisation undertakes on Communication and Visibility.

EQ 10: What is the contribution of the two interventions to improve gender equality in the EU Cooperation, women empowerment and to help addressing social inequalities in Nicaragua?

1. When it comes to gender equality in Latin America, Nicaragua ranks better than most other countries in the region. While there is still a long way to go in order to achieve overall gender equality, there are a number of areas, such as the **relationship between poverty and gender or the rates of violence against women in the country that merit extra attention**.
2. Unfortunately, the last few years have witnessed how the role of gender has gradually been marginalized in the public debate and the work of civil society organisations in the field of gender severely undermined. At the moment the presence of local or international NGOs active in the country is virtually silenced. In these conditions, interviewers have stressed that gender initiatives are very difficult to plan or implement.
3. In that context, increasing the ability to work "toward the inside" has certainly been a wise choice. Applying gender knowledge and experience to generate skills of staff, partners and projects, where current demand remains high, has been a step forward.

4. During the period of implementation and despite the setbacks, considerable progress took place, particularly in terms of capacity building, seeking to work more with EUD staff, with civil society partners and being able to produce a series of products, like studies, assessments, etc., to allow the EUD to integrate gender approaches into their own routines and even at thematic cooperation level.
5. Many activities have been implemented. Reviews and reports on gender analysis, gender plans and design of tools were generated. Examples include studies such as the hidden gender curriculum in education and the institutional diagnosis of gender in the EUD (including a presentation on gender equality in Nicaragua made to the new Ambassador of the EU in Nicaragua), the review of the gender plan of PROSEN programme or the construction of gender implementation plan derived from the GAP III mandate, CLIP Nicaragua (which was awarded on the 25th of November 2021, the recognition as the best gender programme in Latin America), and its presentation to a broad array of actors including national and international. Civil society organisations and activities were reached through a conversation in the framework of cinema forums with young people. Mainstreaming of the gender approach, is expected to feed into the new programmes or projects of the 2021-2027 programming cycle, as well as continuing to support compliance with the GAP III mandates and the implementation of CLIP implementation.
6. The process of generating conditions to make progress has worked well, including a change of perspective, more commitment and more clarity, but especially those interviewed mention a **needed cultural change** to place more emphasis on gender and incorporating a more transformative vision with practical tools (e.g., "it has managed to get us used to having a gender analysis that helps us design projects better"). That has led to a gradual interest and improvement of Gender products. It has provided a very good basis for building the country programme with a more solid basis, a good and collective learning process for the Delegation and the establishment of new capacities after an institutional-internal diagnosis..
7. The remaining challenges are associated with the institutionalization of gender in the long term and the right identification of the needs in terms of future technical assistance, for which there is still considerable dependence. Regarding the first one, capacity has been created but not necessarily specialization in the area. National gender plan received a reward. The ambassador and the head of cooperation are very committed. They are in a very good situation as a team. However, gaps are still perceived between expectations and resources and between the existing demand and the lack of means. Now it is the moment to move from capacity building to the operationalization of what has been learned. At the same time, while progress has been made during the implementation of the different gender activities, that has not meant that dependency on external expertise is greatly reduced.

EQ 11: To what extent do the interventions adhere to the working principles of the rights-based approach?

Both projects have very different ways to promote a rights-based approach but both of them do it effectively. In the case of Communication and Visibility, a considerable part of the activities has been geared towards encouraging non-discrimination and inclusion of marginalized groups and stressing EU support to combat inequalities and discrimination. This has also been promoted across the country, taking into consideration the considerable differences and the importance to spread the leave no one behind principle. It has also promoted transparency in relation to information on the development co-operation programmes, which should be available to both citizens and organisations, and invited them to participate and engage in open debates.

Similarly, ATI NITA strongly supports a rights-based approach. Capacity building actions can be effective and, in this case, through the broad array of work strands, processes, activities and outcomes,

have clearly contributed to strengthening both the capacity of various stakeholders in the country but also to raise the level of awareness in terms of raising the bar of integrating a rights-based approach tools and practices.

Both focus extensively on encouraging participation, especially of vulnerable and marginalized groups – including civil society organisations representing or supporting them – who should have the opportunity to actively participate and influence agenda-setting, context analysis and problem identification, programme planning, risk management implementation and monitoring.

In the current context, despite the type of assignment, activities and products under both projects have recurrently covered aspects of gender, poverty, conflict, disaster prevention, dialogue and inclusion, and the protection of human rights.

Annex 5: Intervention Logic

The diagram below presents a synthetic overview of the Intervention Logic (IL) along the different levels of a results chain (challenge, premises, inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact). It is based on the initial analysis of secondary sources and consultation with key stakeholders and it might be up-dated in the following reports if relevant :

- the national challenges addressed in Nicaragua are complex and huge: extreme poverty, vast inequality, political crisis, closure of democratic spaces and political fragility, climate change, COVID-19 impacts and health risks, economic crisis resulting from the invasion of Ukraine and the new geopolitical scenario.
- at the framework level for two interventions, the EU policies are mainly defined in relation to the MIP 2014-2020 and the MIP 2021-2027. The first one identifies the following three priority strategic focal sectors: support the productive sector, with a focus on rural areas; Effective education for employment; and Adaptation to climate change³⁹. Whereas, the MIP 2021-2027 focuses EU's cooperation in the country on two priority and complementary areas, namely environment and climate change and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Cooperation in these areas is complemented by the EU support to global priorities such as civil society, human rights and democracy and peace and security, as well as the collaboration in order to tackle global challenges⁴⁰. Also, the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in external Action 2021-2025 (GAP III), and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, have to be included as a framework of the EU policy in the country.
- To address these challenges and in line with the EU's external policy, the EU has designed and implemented the technical assistance support in Nicaragua, with the general objective to contribute to build capacity for a more effective and efficient implementation of public policies and of EU cooperation activities, ensuring that the focal sectors can reach maximum results, impact and visibility. The two interventions under evaluation belong to this umbrella programme: the first one, related to the technical assistance to the implementation of the EU cooperation strategy in Nicaragua, has the specific objective of contribute to a more efficient implementation of public policy and EU cooperation activities, and the second one, concerning the communication services and visibility of the European cooperation in Nicaragua has the specific objective to increase the EU visibility in the country.
- The two interventions have implemented a number of activities aimed at achieving their strategic objectives. This set of inputs is expected to generate outputs chains related to: 1) 50 short-term consultancies that have been implemented in support of priority sectors such as productive development, governance, climate change, gender and development, cooperation strategies, indigenous peoples, etc.; 2) Development of mechanisms, instruments and competencies to achieve a positive impact on the implementation of EU projects (identification, formulation and implementation); 3) Support for proper gender mainstreaming in EU cooperation in Nicaragua, in line with the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020; 4) A communication and visibility strategy for the EU in Nicaragua has been designed and implemented; 5) Also, the image and visibility of EU actions has been improved through general and targeted campaigns.
- It is assumed that these outputs have contributed to several outcomes related to: public policy and EU cooperation activities that will be implemented more efficiently and the EU's role will be clearer, and its visibility will increase. Also, they will contribute to the Crosscutting priorities and SDGs, especially the SDG 1 "No Poverty", SDG 4 "Quality education", SDG 5 "Gender Equality", SDG 8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth" and SDG 13 "Climate Action. These results are seen as stepping stones to achieve clearly visible national-wide advances in responding to global challenges and with regards to good governance, social and economic equity; the

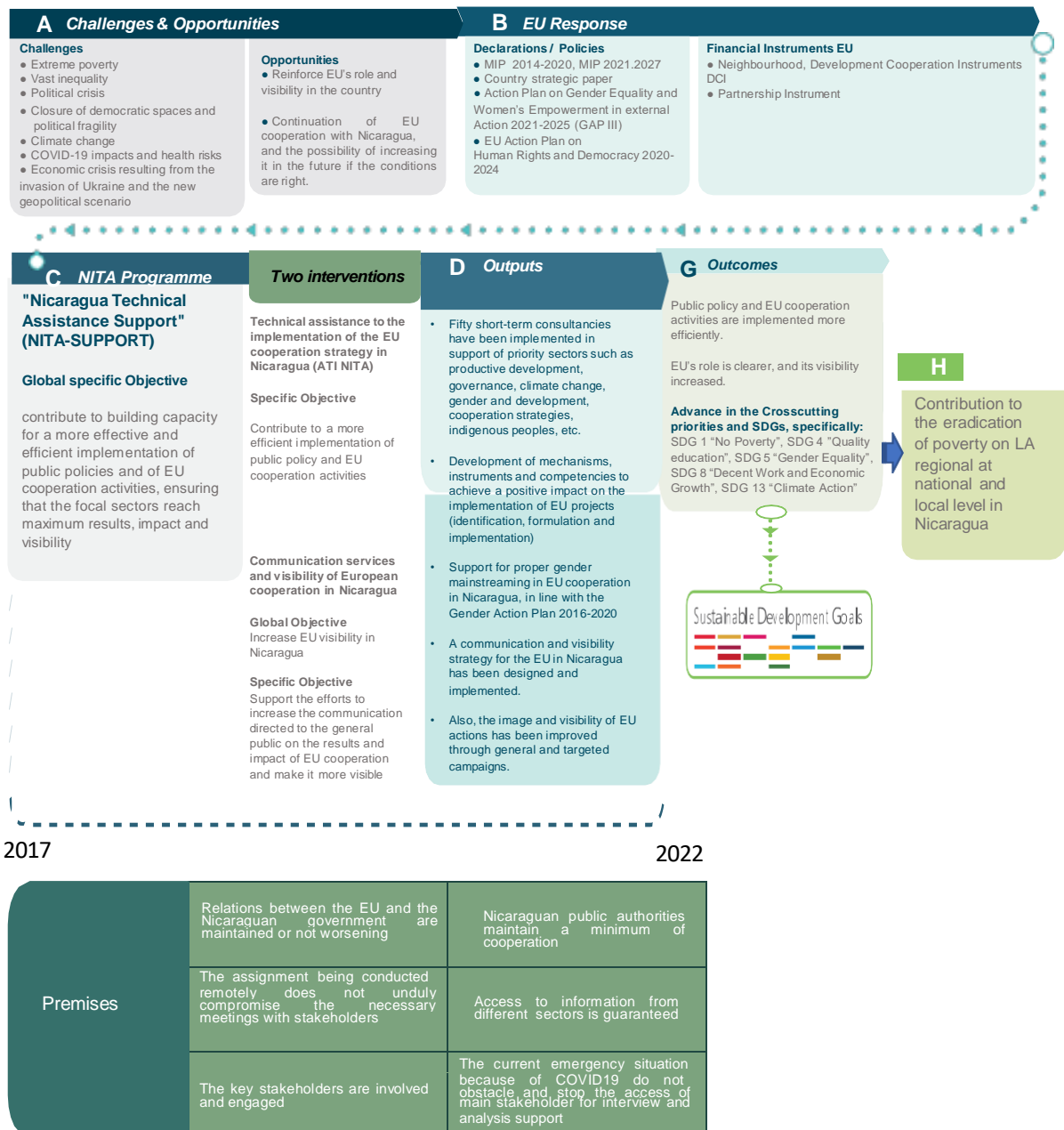
³⁹ Country Strategy Paper and Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2020 Nicaragua, European Commission, 2014

⁴⁰ Republica of Nicaragua, Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 Nicaragua, European Commission, 2021.

protection of natural resources and adaptation to climate change. Both are expected to be the foundations to achieve the highest-level development impact: sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Nicaragua.

Figure 3 Reconstructed intervention logic

NITA Intervention Logic



Annex 7: Literature and documentation consulted

- 1-8 Informes semestrales de progreso de Apple Tree, Barcelona;
- 1-9 Informes semestrales de progreso de ATI NITA
- CF of AT NITA support
- Adendas CF NITA
- Michelle Bachelet: Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua, High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 2022.
- ATI NITA, Mission Control, June 22
- OT IDOM ATI NITA
- Estrategia de Comunicación de la UE para Nicaragua
- Una comunicación más estratégica para la igualdad de género, ATI NITA
- Informe de Resultados de la estrategia de Comunicación y Plan de Actividades 2021, diciembre 2020.
- Resultados del diagnóstico de comunicación UE Nicaragua, Ecorys.
- Análisis de Economía Política en Nicaragua, FUNIDES, 3 de diciembre de 2020.
- Asistencia técnica de corto plazo para la realización del estudio “Currículo oculto y equidad de género en Nicaragua”, 13 de septiembre de 2021.
- Asistencia técnica de corto plazo para la realización de un diagnóstico institucional de igualdad de género. Resultados del diagnóstico institucional, abril 2022.
- Asistencia técnica de corto plazo para la realización del estudio “Currículo oculto y equidad de género en Nicaragua”, septiembre 2021.
- Perfil de Género del País, abril 2020.
- Plan de transversalización del enfoque de género del programa de integración fronteriza: puestos fronterizos de Peñas Blancas, el Guasaule y San Pancho, julio 2020.
- PNDH, Gobierno de Nicaragua, 2015.
- Republic of Nicaragua, Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2014-2020. European Commission, 2013
- Republic of Nicaragua, Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. European Commission, 2020
- ToR ATI NITA
- ToR Comm&visibilidad

Annex 8: List of persons and organisations consulted

NAME	POSITION
	Jefa de Cooperación UE
	CTR 387-771 ASISTENCIA TÉCNICA NITA
	ATI NITA
	Gestora UE del CTR en un periodo
	Gestor UE del CTR en otro periodo y punto focal de género
	Gestor UE usuaria de la AT en temas de cambio climático
	Gestor UE usuaria de la AT en temas de educación
	Gestor UE usuario de la AT en temas de desarrollo productivo
	Experta contratada en temática de género
	Experta contratada en temática de CC
	Experta contratada en temática de juventud
	Coordinadora del contrato en IDOM
	Jefe de cooperación de Luxemburgo. Acaban de trabajar de la mano del NITA en el proceso de formulación del programa de gestión del riesgo de desastres
	UNICEF, involucrado en algunos servicios del NITA
	UNICEF, involucrada en algunos servicios del NITA
	CTR 396-563 COMUNICACIÓN Y VISIBILIDAD
	ATI Comunicación y Visibilidad UE en Nicaragua
	Coordinadora del contrato en Apple Tree
	Consultor Apple Tree
	Gerente General Publicidad Comercial. Partner/ colaborador de APPLE TREE en Nicaragua, encargado de implementar las actividades del contrato en el territorio local y la gestión de RRSS de la DUE -NI
	Gestora General de Abaco. Colaborador en Actividad 4 del contrato Club Erasmus
	DUE Prensa y Política que trabajan en la implementación del contrato
	Directora Fundación Libros para Niños. Actividad Cuéntame Europa
	Vicerrectora Académica UCA
	Colaboradora como presentadora en varias acciones relacionadas con la Actividad 4 del contrato: Club Erasmus