

Optimising the effectiveness and efficiency of EU support to Central American integration efforts

EU-funded programme's two-track focus builds the institutional capacity of the Central American Integration System and showcases EU activities that support regional integration and cooperation between Europe and Central America.



Event Buyers Trade Mission in Costa Rica. Photo by Raquel Soriano (Capacity Building Expert - Strengthening UE Support to Reform and Organisational Development of SICA)



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Established in 1991, the Central American Integration System (SICA) is the institutional framework for regional integration among Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic. The European Union works with SICA to implement its strategy for the region, which currently focuses on three priority areas: regional economic integration; security and the rule of law; and climate change and disaster management.

As part of its Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP), the EU offers support to the institutional strengthening of SICA and other related institutions and the facilitation of EU-Central America policy dialogue around the objectives of Agenda 2030. This support is provided through the Technical Assistance for Strategic Programming in Central America (ATEPECA), which NIRAS is implementing, and focuses on knowledge transfer and training around central themes - democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance and economic and social justice - as well as a communications plan to raise awareness of EU cooperation in the eight SICA countries.

Organisational development

A core component of ATEPECA is support to the General Secretariat of SICA in delivering its strategic vision for 2017-2021. This is done through regional and national activities such as conferences and other events that position the SICA in the region and highlight the importance of regional integration. Other interventions are focused at the SICA Secretariat and aim to improve institutional systemic coordination, strengthen the organisation's capacity to work with development partners, and support the mainstreaming of human rights and gender equality issues in SICA's work.

Increasing visibility of EU actions

Another key element of the project is the production of communication materials to raise awareness of EU development cooperation activities in the region. This includes videos, display stands, content in social networks, photography, and the generation of graphic material and media coverage.

The implementation of this project is being carried out in coordination with the EU (mostly via the EU Delegation to Nicaragua), SICA's General Secretariat, supporting institutions in member state countries, as well as other partners. Monitoring and evaluation will be conducted throughout the development of the work plan endorsed by the EU.

SICA

Taking into account past attempts at regional unification and lessons learned from a history of political crisis, belligerent conflict and dictatorial rule in Central America, the Central America Integration System (SICA) was established with the fundamental objective of realizing the integration of Central America in order to transform the area into a region of Peace, Liberty, Democracy and Development, based firmly on the respect and promotion of human rights.

Donor

European Commission

Client

EU Delegation to
Nicaragua

Location

El Salvador with missions and events within SICA member countries (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize and Dominican Republic)

Contract value

€282.200

Duration

August 2019 -
August 2020



The Buyer Trade Mission is the largest business events in Central America. The 2019 edition (its 21st) was hosted in Costa Rica showcased the exports of local companies from the food, agriculture and specialised industries sectors. European companies were represented via the Eurochamber, which enables them to establish business relationships with firm in the region.

Eurochamber has been participating in the Buyers Trade Mission since 2017 with the main goal of promoting commercial exchange and investment between EU Member States and Central American countries. The event fosters alliances between businesses from both regions and publicises the commercial advantages of EU-Central America cooperation as well as the actions the EU takes to promote integration in the region.



A sample of activities

Recently under this project, NIRAS coordinated the organisation of the Buyers Trade Mission in Costa Rica. One of the most important business networking events in the region, this year companies representing more than 40 countries participated in over 5000 meetings with more than 300 international buyers and 600 Costa Rican exporters, according to data from the Promotora de Comercio Exterior de Costa Rica. A total of 45 European companies took part in this event, of which 39 were European international buyers and 6 suppliers brought by the Federation of European Chambers of Commerce of Costa Rica.

NIRAS also supported the organisation of the event “Council of Ministers for Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic”. This event gathered the various Ministers for Women across the region to promote dialogue and cooperation between Central American countries on issues of gender.

Furthermore, in cooperation Fundación ETEA, the Development Institute of the Loyola University in Spain, the NIRAS project team is currently supporting the implementation of an initiative entitled “Experiencing Integration From The Academy”, which aims to strengthen the connection between the university and research centres focussed on Central American integration to build capacity and cooperation. Under

+ 40

countries participated in the 2019 Buyers Trade Mission in Costa Rica

600

Costa Rican exporters got exposure to 300 international buyers

