



**Highlighted experience**

# A social plan for the recovery and reconstruction of Central America and the Dominican Republic within the framework of regional integration

## OVERCOMING THE CRISIS AND MEETING EVERYDAY CHALLENGES IN THE SICA REGION

Recovering the path of growth and development is a primary challenge for the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA). In the wake of the negative effects caused by the Covid-19 pandemic came the disasters caused by storms Amanda and Cristóbal and hurricanes Eta and Iota that hit the region in 2020.

Due to the economic and social impact of these events, the Secretariat of Central American Social Integration (SICA), with the backing of the EUROsocial+ Programme, coordinated the drafting of the Recovery, Social Reconstruction and Resilience Plan (3R Plan). The Plan – which incorporates the results of a consultation process with the countries – is divided into 3 lines of action, which are: (1) social protection and food security, (2) employment and employability, and (3) sustainable urban development. Each of these consists of a set of strategic projects made up of transformative actions that seek to respond to the problems prioritised by the countries to promote their social reactivation and recovery.

The decision to develop and implement the Plan was led by the Council of Ministers for Social Integration (CIS), with the participation of the authorities of the Council of Ministers for Employment (COMITRAB) and the Central American Council for Housing and Human Settlements (CCVAH). In addition to the advice provided by EUROsocial, the formulation process could count on that of the FAO, the ILO and UN-HABITAT.

The 3R Plan stands out for its all encompassing and gender-responsive approach. Its aim is to improve basic health, education and care services, in addition to creating conditions to generate employment and improve employability.

*Anita Zetina, Secretary General of SICA.*



SISCA - SICA Heads of State and Government support the comprehensive social policy and the 3R Plan for Central America.

### Hubs of the 3R Plan

1. Social protection.
2. Employment and employability.
3. Informal settlements and sustainable urban development.

### Strategic projects

1. Social protection.
2. Care services.
3. Employment and employability generation services.
4. Value chains.
5. Comprehensive neighbourhood improvement.
6. Mapping of informal settlements.
7. Sustainable urban planning.

This initiative is in turn an instrument for the implementation of the Comprehensive Regional Social Policy for Central American Integration ( PSIR-SICA 2020-2040 ), which seeks to reduce inequality in all its manifestations, eradicate hunger and decrease social, territorial and gender gaps. For Francesco Chiodi, Coordinator of the Area of Social Policies of EUROsocial+, “the PSIR is the main reference in the social field of Central American integration”.

The PSIR-SICA and the 3R Plan are important instruments because they set the course, they represent a compass, they define a value horizon, but also a programmatic one, that the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic can follow.

Francesco Chiodi, Coordinator of the Social Policies area, EUROsocial+ European Union Programme



### SISCA - 3R Plan

In the opinion of Anita Zetina, Secretary General of SISCA, “the 3R Plan stands out for its comprehensiveness and its gender mainstreaming approach, along with taking up the fight against climate change”. The 3R Plan aims to improve basic health, education and care services, and also create adequate conditions to generate employment and improve employability throughout the region.

## MINISTERIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

There has been a broad political consensus and enthusiasm around the Plan and its fundamental ideas. The region’s Heads of Government , at their IV ordinary meeting held on June 24, 2021, expressed their support for the Plan. More backing was received in October 2021 within the framework of the 4th Meeting of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. On that occasion, the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Council for Central American Social Integration (CIS), held by the Ministry for Social Development of Guatemala, highlighted the 3R Plan as part of the efforts carried out at the regional level to generate resilience, not only in the face of the effects of COVID-19, but also taking into account the climatic vulnerability of the region.

Parallel to the drawing up of the 3R Plan, the **Council of Ministers for Employment** of Central America and the Dominican Republic (CMTCARD) prepared its own **Action Plan**. The latter, which seeks to promote decent work for the economic recovery, is aligned with the objectives of hub 2 of the 3R plan.

At the same time, in the last third of 2021, the 3R Plan was disseminated and shared in various dialogue spaces, in particular the formal Session of the Plenary Assembly **PARLACEN** in commemoration of the Bicentennial of Central American Independence on 14 September; the **Regional Virtual Forum: Central American Social Integration in the process of recovery and social reconstruction of the SICA region**, organised by SISCA, with the support of EUROsocial+, on October 7 ; and the **5th Consultative Forum of the Central American Disaster Risk Management Policy (PCGIR)** in October, and in which emphasis was placed on the hub 3 projects: Informal Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development.

The 3R Plan was also socialised during the round table entitled, “The housing agenda in Central America and the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Colombia: promoting dialogue and collaboration between countries”, held within the framework of the Thirtieth General Assembly of Ministers and Highest Authorities of Housing and Town Planning of Latin America and the Caribbean; and also, in the preparatory meeting of the Pro Tempore Presidency of Panama for the first half of 2022, in December 2021.



According to the Minister for Human Development and Social Inclusion of Costa Rica, Mr Juan Luis Bermúdez, “the 3R Plan needs to be accompanied not only by the private sector in the region, the grassroots social organisations of our communities, but also by countries

friendly to SICA, cooperating organisations and regional blocks that share principles and ideals, in order to serve a region that can be said to be one of the most vulnerable in the world”

The 3R Plan is linked to the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and helps countries stay on track to achieve the objectives set out in the SDGs.

## SPECIFIC ADVANCES

The specific advances of the Plan can be arranged into three areas:

- 1) Empowerment of the CIS and SISCA: The CIS Ministers, in line with hub 1 of the 3R Plan, set up an alliance with the Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP) to strengthen the capacities of the personnel in charge of social protection programmes, in accordance with hub 1 of the Plan; they also promoted spaces for dialogue and political reflection around the key issues of the 3R Plan, for example with respect to care policies.
- 2) Direct Plan financing: Direct resources for funding the Plan are coming, for now, from the cooperation by the Regional Government of Andalusia, with support actions for the improvement of the social protection and care offer and in tackling the problem of informal settlements. Conversations are currently being held with other international cooperation agencies.
- 3) Adaptation of pre-existing cooperation projects to the Plan: There are also regional projects being implemented in partnership with the German cooperation in place and being managed before the approval of the plan and that have seen the incorporation of adaptations to contribute to the objectives of hubs 2 and 3 of the Plan. The focuses of these projects are the social and occupational integration of migrants and urban planning processes.