



NIRAS: Your Partner in Holistic Governance Solutions

Realising your sustainable potential





NIRAS: Governance and Democracy

Governance is at the heart of many NIRAS projects and plays a supporting role in most others. This capacity statement presents some of our governance assignments and the services we offer in supporting democratic and inclusive governance, ultimately leading to increasing gender equality and human rights. We work with civil society organisations (CSOs), parliaments, and media to establish local-level development and decentralisation, undertaking Public Financial Management (PFM) and Public Administration Reform.

NIRAS contributes to just and inclusive societies by pursuing a broad range of approaches promoting good governance and democratic processes. We help increase responsive, inclusive, and participatory planning and representative decision-making at all levels - contributing directly to SDG 16 by introducing new tools such as climate and gender budgeting and tracking public funding towards climate, gender equality, and biodiversity.

Together with key stakeholders, we examine complex situations with dedication. We emphasise socially acceptable solutions and analyse opportunities and alternatives. This approach has earned NIRAS a reputation for delivering cost-efficient governance advisory services of the highest quality that meet our clients' demands.

We provide:

- Highly experienced expert teams in different fields of governance, including but not limited to decentralisation, PFM tools, CSOs, media and institutional development;
- Assistance in drafting policies, regulatory frameworks, etc. and advice on good governance;
- Support for efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable service-providing agencies;
- Institutional and policy reform aimed at enhancing sustainable performance and public service-delivery;
- Support for decentralisation processes and training of government officials at state and local levels;
- Support of e-governance and M&E systems;
- Development of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) programmes and cutting-edge practical knowledge on application of new PFM tools, including Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessments;
- Support for development of independent media;
- Using innovative approaches and cutting-edge practical knowledge in our project implementation / management;
- Formulation, implementation, review, and evaluation of civil society programmes;
- Capacity development, such as organisational development, advocacy, financial administration, participation, non-discrimination;
- Results-based management;
- Gender mainstreaming in all phases of the project cycle.



NIRAS' work in promoting freedom-of-speech initiatives and building institutional capacities of public institutions enables citizens, academia, and decision-makers to be better informed, leading to more inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance. A core strength is our support to civil society and promotion of dialogue with governments, facilitating citizens' participation in decision-making and leading to improved governance. Applying a human-rights-based approach to all of our competence areas enables us to make international human rights standards a foundation of our work.



For the past 20+ years, NIRAS has worked extensively in conflict and post-conflict zones around the world. This experience informs our belief that we must build societies that are open to all, offer just treatment to all citizens, and provide effective, accountable, and participatory governing bodies. Without these elements, social peace will not last, violence may (re)surface, and most development achievements will be lost.

We offer a wide variety of services: capacity-building and institutional strengthening, oversight of district and community development planning and budgeting, and the introduction of effective monitoring and evaluation systems. Across our services, we incorporate cross-cutting competencies, including gender perspectives through, e.g., gender-responsive budgeting. We build capacities of stakeholders in targeted countries and regions with regards to human rights, gender, good governance, as well as peace and security.



Support to Civil Society Organisations

Civil society provides citizens with the tools and opportunities to make their voices heard and hold duty-bearers accountable. NIRAS believes in the autonomy of local agencies and works to support CSOs in influencing decision-making processes, promoting their essential role as both 'societal watch-dogs' and important development actors.



NIRAS prioritises the application of integrated tools and approaches. Our in-house staff and our vast network of external experts hold in-depth knowledge and long track records of working across sectors applying cutting-edge approaches. We encourage local ownership, cooperation, dialogue, and partnerships, fostering inclusive and sustainable civil societies. Through our services, we present guidelines on how to accomplish sustainable change within cooperation by ensuring measurable objectives and outcomes. We promote CSOs' active participation at the centre of the development pro-



Development and Implementation of Trainings for Ugandan CSOs

During the last two decades, CSOs have experienced exponential growth in Uganda. Despite their increasing number, CSOs' influence and participation in political processes are often restricted and their role limited to service delivery. In many cases, limitations on CSO outreach is compounded by insufficient capacity within the organisations. In 2018, the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP) was launched to address this.



NIRAS was contracted in March 2019 to contribute to the Civil Society in Uganda Support programme (CUSP), jointly funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The main focus was the development and implementation of innovative and interactive trainings for CSOs.

“ *The EU believes in the strong role CSOs play for any country's development. The CUSP programme will leverage CSOs' contributions and their complementarity to Government and Private Sector led interventions towards the objective of contributing to reduced poverty through better governance.* ”

*European Union Ambassador to Uganda,
H.E Attilio Pacifici.*

While all eight training modules were initially envisioned as in-classroom trainings, NIRAS switched to a blended learning approach during COVID-19 to facilitate continuous learning progress even during nationwide restrictions. The blended learning approach combined the advantages of both offline and online learning: The interactive e-learning sessions, which were hosted on the GIZ digital learning platform atingi, contained educational interviews, interactive learning games and a variety of practical tools. In addition, participants were asked to complete offline assignments to put the learned theory into practice, and they received 1-on-1 coaching from experienced subject experts.

“ *This has been one of my most enriching and practical courses I have done in recent years. It's very relevant, challenging and empowering. [...] it has enriched my work as a chief executive of a growing organisation, accredited trainer and a mentor.* ”

Feedback from e-learning course participant. Over the course of the 3-year project, 1654 participants were trained, 44% of whom were female.

cess. We base our thinking, design, and implementation on result-based management, the 'Theory of Change' and gender-mainstreaming, and we apply a human-rights-based approach to all our work.

In **Mali**, we support civil society in the context of political crisis, recognising youth as drivers of change. We provide grants, capacity, and organisational development to associations and CSOs to strengthen community resilience. In **Kenya**, we have supported civil society in the management of natural resources, reducing livelihood vulnerability, and increasing cooperation between local government and CSOs. The Public Participation and Accountability Facilitation Fund in **Vietnam** supported local CSOs in enhancing policy dialogue and advocacy, enabling them to engage more effectively in the national legislative processes.





U-LEAD - Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development



Decentralisation and Local-Level Development

Decentralisation is a complex multifaceted phenomenon that does not allow for one-size-fits-all solutions. NIRAS is cognisant that the process of decentralisation can have both positive and negative consequences if not done purposefully. We strive to work diligently together with our clients and stakeholders to guide successful decentralisation processes. Decentralisation can only be realised successfully when complementary policies and proper national and local conditions are in place. We approach decentralisation processes by promoting well designed policies, addressing procedural weaknesses, and implementing pragmatic and practical implementation strategies.

NIRAS has worked successfully with decentralisation reforms for many years, in countries such as **Ukraine, Tunisia, Mali, Vietnam, and Georgia**, among others, including in the capacity of evaluators of ongoing and completed decentralisation projects. We acknowledge that there are many challenges with implementing decentralisation reforms, for example, a general lack of confidence of citizens in public institutions, a lack of legitimacy of local government representatives and a missing democratic political culture at the grassroots level. These interrelated challenges must be addressed for any new decentralisation reform to be effective and sustainable.

Reform of public service provision is at the heart of the successful decentralisation process in Ukraine. NIRAS implemented the Ukraine Local Empowerment Accountability and Development programme (U-LEAD) between 2019 and 2021 with great success. The programme aimed to support the decentralisation reform in Ukraine by establishing Administrative Service Centres (ASCs) in all 24 Oblasts of Ukraine. As a result of the project, citizens in all parts of Ukraine now have easier access to public services to, for example, register their residency, civil status, or business; apply for ID cards; or access pension fund or employment centre services. The project aimed to make ASCs a one-stop shop where a wide range of government administrative services that consider gender equality, a human rights-based approach, a conflict sensitivity and anti corruption could be provided.



NIRAS worked to create and upgrade over 400 ASCs during the projects' four rounds. The work entailed both giving institutional support to the centres by establishing institutional structures and providing staff training, as well as through the provision of "physical" logistical support in procuring office equipment and software, furniture, and setting up electronic queue systems and mobile ASCs (specially equipped vans able to deliver services directly to some of the most remote areas in Ukraine). A large part of the work also included working extensively with awareness-raising and citizen participation in order to ensure local anchoring and ownership of the new centres.

Decentralisation proved to be important to the resilience of the Ukrainian state, also and especially in times of war. Local communities created in the decentralisation process (called hromadas) are playing a significant role in the humanitarian response to the war by collecting information about the needs of citizens, sharing it with oblast authorities and government ministries, and receiving and distributing aid. All hromadas have established organisational structures to coordinate local efforts. Larger hromadas' social security services support the local authorities by managing logistics, shelters, and the distribution of aid with providers.

Public Financial Management

A core aspect of a country's governance system is an effective public financial management system that ensures the best fiscal and financial outcomes while contributing to sustainable social and economic development. NIRAS works with PFM reform and decentralisation following the PEFA framework, aiming to achieve more effective and efficient management of government revenues, expenditures, assets, and liabilities. More recently, PFM reforms have started to include transformative processes focusing on increased transparency and stronger participation of actors and stakeholders and involving citizens through open budgets and participatory budgeting processes.

NIRAS has been working with such processes involving civil societies and parliaments.

Recent PFM reforms also aim at better targeting priority areas such as improving gender equality, ensuring more funding towards climate mitigation and adaptation, and focusing on safeguarding biodiversity. In recent years, international finance institutions have established frameworks and increased efforts to introduce gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), such as the PEFA GRPFM framework. Our team of PFM experts has carried out PEFA assessments using the GRPFM framework and we have partnered with international players such as the IMF and the EU to increase awareness of how national budgets can be used to promote gender equality.



PFM reform, including decentralisation, aims to achieve more effective, and efficient management of government revenues, expenditures, assets, and liabilities.



Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Ukraine

NIRAS implemented the Sida-funded GRB project in Ukraine between 2013 and 2020. The overall aim was to integrate gender budgeting processes into the ongoing PFM reform in Ukraine, ultimately ensuring that women, youth and marginalised groups are reached by budget allocations. Gender budgeting tools were integrated into the regular budget process, performance-based budgeting measures, and the medium-term expenditure framework.

The project was designed to run concurrently on the national and regional levels to improve budget efficiency by better addressing women's and men's service needs. In the beginning of 2019, the Ministry of Finance issued methodological recommendations on GRB for key spending units at state and local level. Thanks to collective efforts at all levels of government and the resulting outcomes, today Ukraine is recognised as one of the best practical illustrations of GRB. The GRB project was implemented before the Ukraine war, the methodology is now an active tool in establishing the Ukraine recovery and reconstruction plan.



Parliamentary Strengthening

Good governance depends on strong institutions, not least on the national parliamentary level. For many years, NIRAS has worked together with different national parliaments to strengthen their capacity to ensure good governance within a multitude of sectors.



NIRAS strengthens governance in Malawi's agriculture sector by working directly with MPs

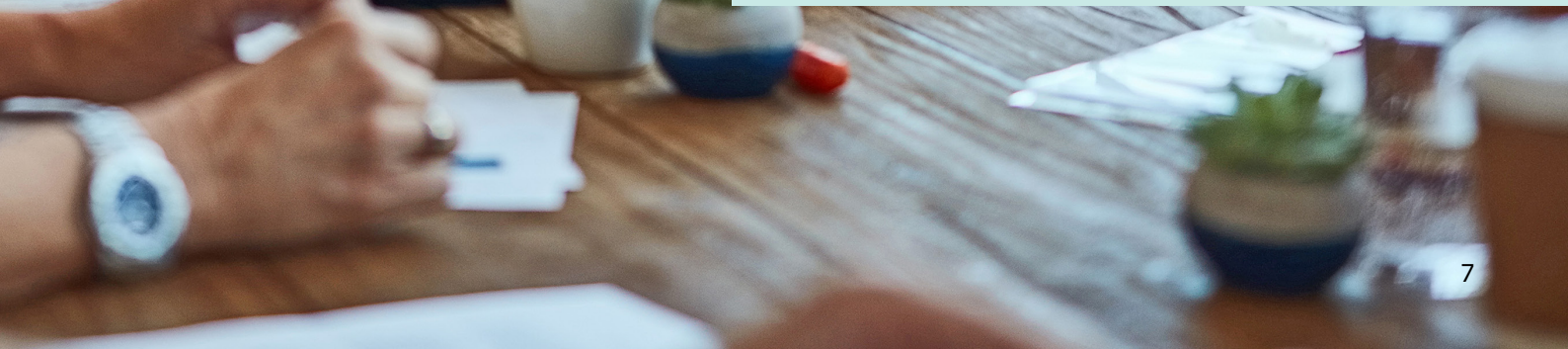


Between 2018 and 2023, NIRAS implemented the programme Support to Parliament and Media to Strengthen Governance in the Agriculture Sector funded by the European Commission.

The overall objective of the project was to promote sustainable agricultural growth in order to increase incomes, employment and food security in Malawi in the context of changing climate. Key aspects were the strengthening of the parliament's capacity to appraise agriculture budgets, track related public expenditures and critically access agriculture, food security and nutrition-related policies.

As part of the project, the NIRAS team held a three-day workshop targeted at Members of Parliament (MPs) of three committees - Agriculture, Natural Resources, and HIV/AIDS and Nutrition. Representatives gathered to learn more about their role in policy and budgetary processes and the importance of exercising their oversight power to hold the government accountable for commitments made to its citizens.

The feedback on the capacity-building workshop was extremely positive. There was an animated discussion on the role of Parliament as more than just a "rubber stamp" of government policy and related budgets. MPs learned how to become familiar with the issues that come before committee and get more involved in the audit process, for example by analysing audit reports and raising budgetary questions where necessary.



Building capacity to enhance freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity in media across the globe

Running since 2018, our International Training Programme (ITP) on Media in a Democratic Framework follows the concept of all of Sida's ITPs: bring people from a number of targeted countries together to learn more and exchange knowledge on a subject about which Sweden has something extra to offer. To date, 500+ participants from 21 countries have participated.

The overall ambition of this programme is to promote and strengthen free, independent and professional journalism and reduce (self) censorship, as well as promote freedom of expression and access to information, accountability, transparency, gender equality and a civilised public discourse. The aim is to strengthen participants' and their organisations' capacities to contribute to functional and up-to-date systems and structures for media self-regulation in coordination with organisational and legal structures. In this way, the programme promotes and contributes to a media environment characterised by freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity. In addition, NIRAS supports advancing gender equality in the media reform, how media report on gender issues, as well as gender mainstreaming in public administration, sector expertise and media production.



“ This ITP exposes participants to how the media functions within a democratic framework. One of the programme's five phases - probably the most important - is to bring the participants together, showing them how Swedish and Danish media works, what self-regulation is, and even at the cultural level, what they do and how they do it in different ways. After this visit, our participants start to think about the specific change projects that they will work on in their own countries within this area. ”
Olga Vallee, project manager.

Media and Democracy

The media is often referred to as the fourth estate, or as in Sweden the “third state power”. We acknowledge that a free, objective and skilled media is an essential component of any democratic society, and good governance of said societies. The media, both traditional and social, provides information to citizens and government alike which enables them to make responsible and informed decisions. The media also serves as an effective checking function, which ensures that elected officials uphold their promises and work on behalf of the electorate. We see that several trends are currently transforming the media sector as well as influencing fundamental pillars of democracy, such as freedom of expression and public discourse. Digitalisation and new forms of distribution of information and news are challenging legacy media, which is increasingly losing ground, giving rise to misinformation/disinformation as online platforms and social media are becoming de facto publishers and distributors of news and information to the public.

Among the most important questions to address when working to enhance media freedom and capability are: Who holds the power to communicate to society? Who has access to the means of communication? And to whom are they communicating? NIRAS has a long history of working with these questions and we aim to continue to be at the forefront of tackling these ever emerging and developing challenges. We acknowledge the underlying need for focusing on the media when it comes to promoting good governance and democracy. Citizens demand for trustworthy, free, independent and professional journalism, which is a prerequisite for a functional democracy. Self- and co-regulation of both legacy and social media are a means to that end.

NIRAS is working both with the media directly as well as with citizen participation and awareness raising in many of our projects targeting good governance, including the aforementioned Malawi project highlighted as well as in the U-LEAD project.



Public Administration Reform

Good governance requires strong and responsible institutions – in the public and private sector as well as civil society – in order to ensure adequate division and fulfilment of roles and responsibilities according to the mandate assigned to each institution. Using a Human Rights-Based Approach and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, NIRAS advises on the development and strengthening of institutions at all levels.

The role of the public sector is to ensure rule of law, responsible regulation of public and common resources, and responsive delivery of public services to citizens and businesses, be it tax collection, health, education, energy, water supply, agriculture, environment, or any other field requiring common rules and action. When appropriate, public sector institutional development can include decentralisation processes and outsourcing of services.

In order to fulfil their role, public sector institutions must not only have the proper systems in place but also the necessary procedures and tools and adequately trained staff. Capacity-building is an integral part of institutional development, as skills are needed to sustain a broad range of specialist expertise such as policy formulation, human resource development, legislation, and law enforcement as well as technical capacities in specific service delivery and agency. NIRAS's capacity-building efforts are based on a needs analysis and adjusted to the allocation of resources and responsibilities among the different levels of government. At the same time, we provide support to staff for driving and managing change within their organisations using problem-based and adaptive approaches.

NIRAS's approach to institutional development and capacity-building is always results-oriented. We focus on the mandate and strategic goals of the organisation or institution in question, the external and internal contexts in which they operate, staff motivation, and willingness to change. Our technical assistance aims to enhance service delivery, making it more accountable to society and citizens, and to ensure adherence to defined standards and sustainable, economic management of public and common resources.

Harmonisation of the policy and legal framework for the civil service at all administrative levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina



In this project, NIRAS' role was to ensure that civil service policy and legislative frameworks on all administrative levels (including the selected pilot cantons) are further aligned with the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration and objectives of the PAR Strategic Framework. This was done particularly regarding depoliticisation and harmonisation of the definitions and scope of the civil service while taking into account that the scope met the needs of different levels.

From the beginning of the project, the project team worked with the beneficiary institutions to develop a mechanism enabling coordination between the various Human Resource Management (HRM) institutions at different levels of government in order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practice. The focus was also on strengthening the capacity of the staff employed in the key HRM institutions, that is, the specialists who deal with HRM affairs.

“ Given the demands of modern and efficient public administration reform that the European Union puts before Bosnia and Herzegovina in the accession process, such projects and international assistance to institutions in general are not only important but invaluable. **”** Neven Akšamija, Director of the BiH Civil Service Agency



Selected references

EU Support to the National Assembly of Zambia II

 COUNTRY Zambia	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 1 590 500 EUR	 DURATION 2021-2025
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Ukraine's Cohesion and Regional Development (UCORD)

 COUNTRY Ukraine	CLIENT SDC	 VALUE 7 641 251 EUR	 DURATION 2022-2026
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EU FWC SIEA 2018: Lot 3 Human Rights, Democracy and Peace

 COUNTRY Global	CLIENT EU	 VALUE 2 300 000 EUR	 DURATION 2018-2023
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PROSPERA (DFAT Economic Development Program) - Technical Services Panel

 COUNTRY Indonesia	CLIENT DFAT	 VALUE 200 000 EUR	 DURATION 2020-2023
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Civil Society Support in Bosnia and Herzegovina

 COUNTRY Bosnia and Herzegovina	CLIENT SDC	 VALUE 10 089 363 EUR	 DURATION 2021-2027
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Ukraine Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development programme (U-LEAD)

 COUNTRY Ukraine	CLIENT Sida, EC	 VALUE 11 807 850 59 EUR	 DURATION 2019-2021
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Good Financial Governance Phases I-III

 COUNTRY Mozambique	CLIENT GIZ	 VALUE 1 909 000 EUR 3 117 961 EUR 3 023 568 EUR	 DURATION 2015-2016 2017-2019 2019-2021
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Support to the Ministry of Finance in the Process of Introduction of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Ukraine

 COUNTRY Ukraine	CLIENT Sida	 VALUE 6 747 733 EUR	 DURATION 2013-2020
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Programme to Support Decentralization and Fight Poverty

 COUNTRY Burundi	CLIENT GIZ	 VALUE 2 543 128 EUR	 DURATION 2014-2019
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Management Contractor (MC) of Local Investment Climate (LIC) sub-component, Business Sector Programme Support Phase IV

 COUNTRY Tanzania	CLIENT DANIDA	 VALUE 3 301 434 EUR	 DURATION 2014-2020
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Civil Society Support Facility - CSSF phases I and II

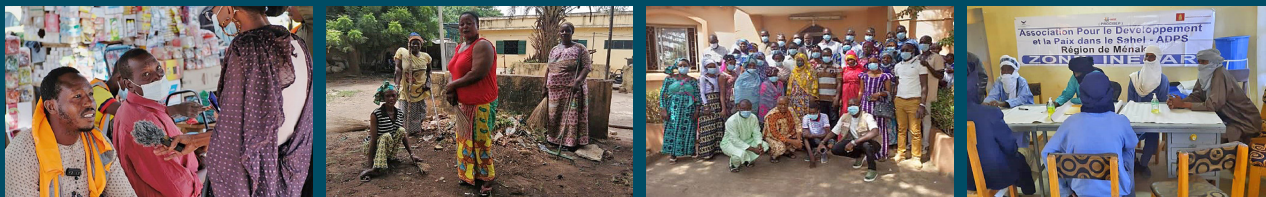
 COUNTRY North Macedonia	CLIENT SDC	 VALUE 6 934 742 EUR/ 5 898 540 CHF	 DURATION 2014-2018 2019-2022
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Support to Parliament and Media to Strengthen Governance in Agri sector KULIMA

 COUNTRY Malawi	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 1 900 000 EUR	 DURATION 2018-2023
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Gestionnaire du Fonds d'Appui Aux Moteurs du Changement (FAMOC)/ Fund for Support to the Drivers of Change

 COUNTRY Mali	CLIENT DANIDA	 VALUE 2 147 837 EUR/ 15 977 330 DKK	 DURATION 2017-2022
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Strategic Programme Management and M&E Support, Kenya Country Programme

 COUNTRY Kenya	CLIENT DANIDA	 VALUE 11 465 500 DKK 5 168 910 DKK	 DURATION 2017-2021
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Active Citizen Participation in Tunisia (Participation Active des Citoyennes et Citoyens Tunisiens - PACT) Phase 1, 2020-2022

 COUNTRY Tunisia	CLIENT SDC	 VALUE 4 323 882 EUR/ 4 499 864 CHF	 DURATION 2020-2022
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Strengthening Governance and Civil Society Programme - Training of CSO Staff Members and Advice to GIZ Advisors

 COUNTRY Uganda	CLIENT GIZ	 VALUE 2 404 226 EUR	 DURATION 2019-2021
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CSO Roadmap Facility

 COUNTRY Multi	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 1 422 380 EUR	 DURATION 2021-2024
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Strengthening Human Resources Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina

 COUNTRY Bosnia and Herzegovina	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 1 000 000 EUR	 DURATION 2020-2022
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FWC SIEA 2018 - Lot 3: Human Rights, Democracy and Peace

 COUNTRY Multi	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 2 067 124 EUR	 DURATION 2018-2022
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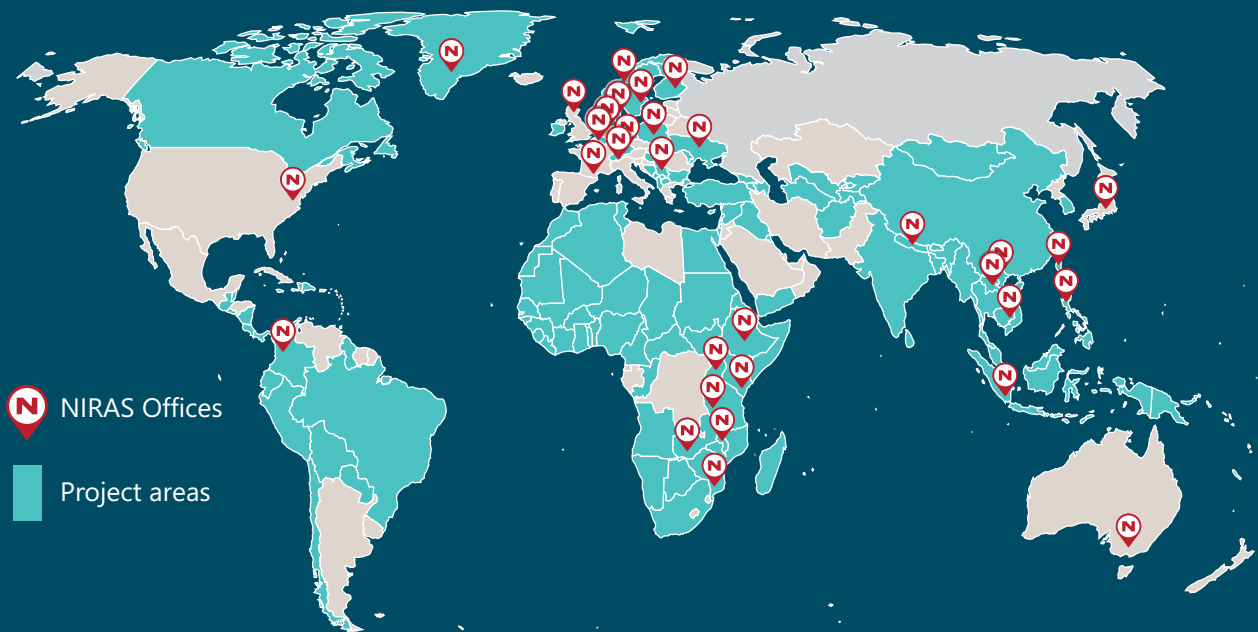
International Training Programmes (ITP) in Self-regulation of the Media Sector

 COUNTRY Global	CLIENT Sida	 VALUE 3 254 325 EUR/ 34 692 000 SEK	 DURATION 2017-2021
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Support to the National Public Broadcaster of Ukraine

 COUNTRY Ukraine	CLIENT EC	 VALUE 1 056 392 EUR	 DURATION 2017-2021
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NIRAS Global Presence



NIRAS' decentralised structure ensures that we are always close to our projects. With 51 offices in 31 countries worldwide, we maintain strong local ties to clients, experts and organisations in all of our key markets. Building on our motto "We listen, we learn, we deliver", NIRAS is proud to be a long-term partner in the pursuit of growth and prosperity for the countries in which we work.

We operate a specific Facilities and FWC Unit with a dedicated team of over 30 employees, based in Denmark, Belgium, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Scotland and Serbia, which enables us to have staff working on FWCs 24 hours a day.

Realising your sustainable potential



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