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# EURECS+ ETHIOPIA

A EUROPEAN RESPONSE  
TO ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT  
IN ETHIOPIA

## Final Evaluation

FED/2020/415-432

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In collaboration with :



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## List of abbreviations

ACP- African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
ADP - Amhara Democratic Party
ADR - Alternative Dispute Resolutions
CBO- Community Based Organization
CCL - Centre for Creative Leadership
CCTV - Closed-Circuit Tele Vision camera
CECOE- Coalition of Civil Society Organization for Elections
CEPPS –Consortium of Elections and Political Processes
CFSP- EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSO - Civil Society Organization
CSP - Charity and Society Proclamation
CVE- Civic and voter education
CVP - Communication and Visibility Plan
DAC - Development Assistance Committee
DAG - Donors Assistance Group
DIP - Democratic Institutions Program
EAD - UN Electoral Assistance Division
ECES - European Centre for Electoral Support
ECONEC - Electoral Commission Network of the Economic Community
ECOWAS- Economic Community of West African States
EDF - European Development Fund
EDR - Electoral Dispute Resolution
EEAS - European External Action Service
EEM - Election Expert Mission
EISA - Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EMB - Electoral Management Body
EMS-Election Monitoring System
EPEA - Electoral Political Economy Analysis
EPRDF - Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
ECSF - European Civil Society Fund
EUD - European Union Delegation
EU-EOM - European Union Election Observation Mission
EURECS -European Response to Electoral Cycle Support
EU-SDGN - EU Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria
FoF - Forum of Federation
GIS - Geographic Information System
IcSP-FPI - Instrument for contributing to stability and peace
International IDEA - International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES - International Foundation for Electoral System
IRI - International Republican Institute
IDP - Internally Displaced Person
IOCC - International Orthodox Christian Charity
HINGO - Humanitarian International Non-Governmental Organization
HR - Human Resources
HPR - The House of Peoples' Representatives

JEOC - Joint Election Operations Centre
KFW - German Development Bank
LEAD - Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders
MEPA - Master program in Electoral Policy and Administration
MoU - Memorandum of Understanding
NAM - Needs Assessment Mission
NDI - National Democratic Institute
NEBE - National Electoral Board of Ethiopia
NIMD - Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NISS - National Intelligence and Security Service
NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
OLF - Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front
PCU - Project Coordination Unit
PEV-Ethiopia - Preventing Election-related Conflict and Violence in Ethiopia
PRAG - Practical Guide on Contract Procedures for European Union External Action
PS - Police Station
PWC – PricewaterhouseCoopers
R-JEOC - Regional - Joint Electoral Support Center
SADC - Southern Africa Development Community
SC - Steering Committee
SNNPR- Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’ Region
SOP - Standard Operating Procedure
SQL - Software Quantum Language
ToT - Training of Trainers
ToR - Terms of Reference
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USAID - US Agency for International Development
VAWIE - Violence against Women in Elections
WPE - Workers Party of Ethiopia
VR - Voter Registration

## 1. Executive summary

### 1.1. Purpose of the evaluation

Systematic and timely evaluation of its programmes and activities is an established priority of the European Commission and its European partners. Evaluations are therefore carried out by independent consultants.

In March 2023, a few weeks before the closure of EURECS + ECES engaged an external consultant to carry out the final evaluation of the European Union Support to Electoral Cycle in Ethiopia plus: EURECS plus Ethiopia, a 2-year project that started implementation in April 2021, hereafter referred to as “the Project”.

Specifically, this evaluation aims to provide the German Embassy, the EU Delegation to the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, relevant partner institutions, and stakeholders and ECES with:

- An overall independent assessment of the performance of the Project, paying particular attention to its results measured against its objectives and expected results.
- A set of recommendations based on the lessons learned and best practices that may inform future similar actions in the field of electoral assistance and democratic development support.

### 1.2. Scope of the evaluation

The final evaluation of EURCES+ was carried out during March/ April 2023 and covered the entire period of project implementation from the April 2021 until the May 2023.

### 1.3. Methodological approach

The evaluation has been carried out in accordance with the DEVCO Evaluation methodology for projects/programmes as set out on the website <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/71165>.

It has been conducted by one expert who has a solid expertise in the field of elections and project management. The evaluator was responsible for data collection and analyses and for the evaluation report, including the formulation of value judgements and the drafting of conclusions and recommendations. The expert used a mixed method approach based on qualitative and quantitative data. The expert was responsible for the delivery of the main deliverables in English.

### 1.4. Data analysis and collection methods

The evaluation used both primary and secondary data to gather the information needed for the report. This included: desk review and secondary data, in person interviews in Addis Ababa and remote interview for several stakeholders who were in other locations. The expert reviewed available documents before, during and after the field work as needed. The evaluation expert spent one weekday in - country to collect and discuss findings and to review the data collected from the field. This including meeting with the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) in Addis Ababa.

The data collected through interviews, observation and review of documents were processed, and the main findings were extrapolated and listed against the intended outcome areas of the Project. The expert synthesized those findings into the main points that were to be discussed in

the Evaluation Report with ECES. The evaluation expert maintained an impartial and professional view towards developing its findings and based them on the evidence found and against the anticipated outcomes according to the Project Document.

The Evaluation Report has followed EU standards for independent evaluation reporting.

### 1.5. Difficulties encountered.

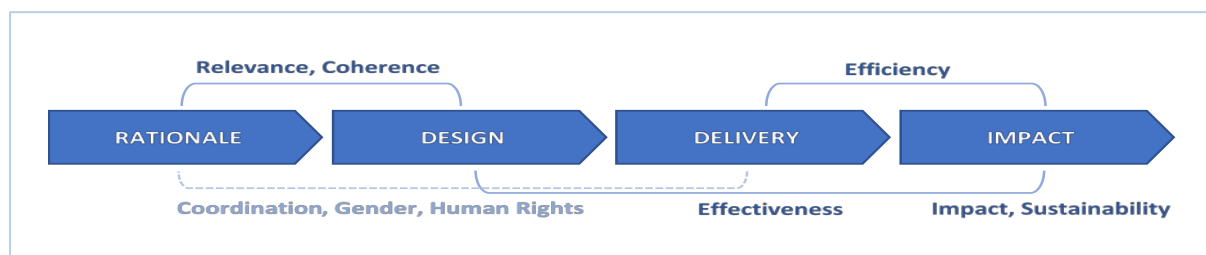
The evaluation was made under time constraint.

To rationalize the time in an efficient manner, the project team and the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in Addis facilitated all contacts beforehand between the evaluator and external stakeholders.

### 1.6. Evaluation framework of the action

The evaluation used the six standard OECD - Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria to conduct the evaluation process, namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Figure 1: Evaluation Framework of the Action



### 1.7. Main conclusions / Overall assessment

#### Relevance

The overall design of EURECS+ is very relevant as it addresses NEBE's needs in a context where the institution in charge of the conduct of elections in Ethiopia was facing major difficulties to organize the June and September 2021 general elections. EURECS + was designed as an emergency response to fill the gap in logistics in a context of a global pandemic and security crisis.

The House of Peoples' Representatives elections, due since August 2020, had already been postponed several times because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Tigray. In the context of 2021, NEBE was highly dependent on Developments Partners (DPs) to organize these elections. The project filled a gap in logistics and provided an essential support to NEBE in a context where these elections were the first to be held after the democratic reform process took place in 2018. The polls were seen as a crucial step towards the reform agenda.

EURECS + is in line with the EU's policy and the German government strategic objectives in Ethiopia's which is to provide support to interventions that seek to consolidate human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law in partners' countries.

## Coherence

It is noticeable that since 2019, the EU has engaged quite a number of resources to support the democratic process in Ethiopia. The analysis of these interventions shows tight links between EURECS + and EURECS and the important level of synergies is quite strong between the two projects supporting NEBE. The current analysis of the activities of EURECS and EURECS+ show clearly that there is an internal division of tasks between these two projects. The two interventions share the same overall objective, and an important amount of division of costs. These interventions are complementary to each other and EURECS +, according to various stakeholders, seems to have been designed as an extension of EURECS. Regarding this statement, the level of coherence is quite high.

External coherence and synergies have been established between the UNDP, IFES and ECES at the early stage of the electoral process and have gradually increased as donor resources have become scarcer after the 2021 general elections.

UNDP led projects and EURECS+ both have been highly involved in joint and coordinated efforts to support NEBE operational capacity during the last general elections and the organization of the Somali and in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) Referendums.

## Effectiveness

EURECS + has been quite effective to provide NEBE with PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), masks and hand sanitizers, to prevent the risk of contracting Covid-19 on election day. This intervention was a priority for the NEBE which was expected to comply with the WHO and EPHI/FMOH COVID- 19 guidelines during the electoral process.

The contribution of EURECS + to support an awareness raising campaign on the handling of complaints about election results has not been implemented. Instead, under this component, initial planned activities were switched to increase voter turnout through an awareness campaign in Addis Ababa and in the Somali region.

EURECS + contribution to support the delivery of the electoral material has been quite significant. This amount spent under component 3, which was mainly dedicated to the delivery of the electoral material in the regions for the general elections and two referendums, represents 54.28 % of the whole budget of the project. In comparison to the other components, it is quite visible that the delivery of logistical and operational support to the NEBE was the primary focus of EURECS + as it is reflected in the resources invested in the component 3. The electoral material was delivered on time to the regions, contributing considerably to the proper conduct of elections. As the project activities were implemented at the request of NEBE, the results of Component 3 are in the meantime a good indicator of NEBE's priorities during the election process.

## Efficiency

Evidence suggests that procurement and logistics to distribute project inputs were done in a cost-effective manner. The budget and procurement processes were designed to ensure the best possible value for money and ratio costs to activities particularly between EURECS and EURECS+.

EURECS + has been implemented under the overall supervision of the Project Coordination Unit. ECES Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and the Practical guide on contract procedures for European Union external action (PRAG) procedures were used to implement the project resources. EURECS + procurements were made in conformity with the EU PRAG regulation in Ethiopia which is a country classified as in crisis<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, EURECS + used flexible procedures to organize the various procurements and the delivery and retrieval of the electoral equipment's in the regions. This flexible approach contributed largely to the high level of effectiveness of EURECS + as it facilitated the delivery of the planned activities. The constraint of time was one of the biggest challenges of the project implementation.

NEBE has been quite reluctant to give visibility to the actions of its partners United Nation Development Program, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and ECES all along the electoral process. This issue has been raised lately by the EU Delegation to Ethiopia. Considering that elections in Ethiopia are a real political issue, the EU delegation did not force the visibility actions during the electoral period.

## Impacts

The biggest impact of the support provided by EURECS + is to have directly supported the organization of credible elections in June and September 2021 despite the country being fraught with insecurity, registration problems, and other challenges such as the Covid 19 pandemic. In addition, EURECS + contributed to the organization of credible elections in Somali for delivery and retrieval of sensitive electoral Materiel and for the referendum in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) on 6 February 2023. NEBE and several stakeholders acknowledged that without EURECS+ support, the electoral management body would not have been able to organize the June and September 2021 elections.

According to the stakeholders interviewed, EURECS+ contributed to strengthen the legitimacy of the democratic reform process as the perceived successful elections were an entry point to consolidate the reform process for further democratization processes.

## Sustainability

Although EURECS + was designed to provide emergency operational support to NEBE, with immediate and short-term effects, other elements of the project provided a degree of sustainability for the electoral processes moving ahead. The expert in logistics hired under the

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<sup>1</sup> Ethiopia is in a situation of conflict and fragility as per the PRAG.

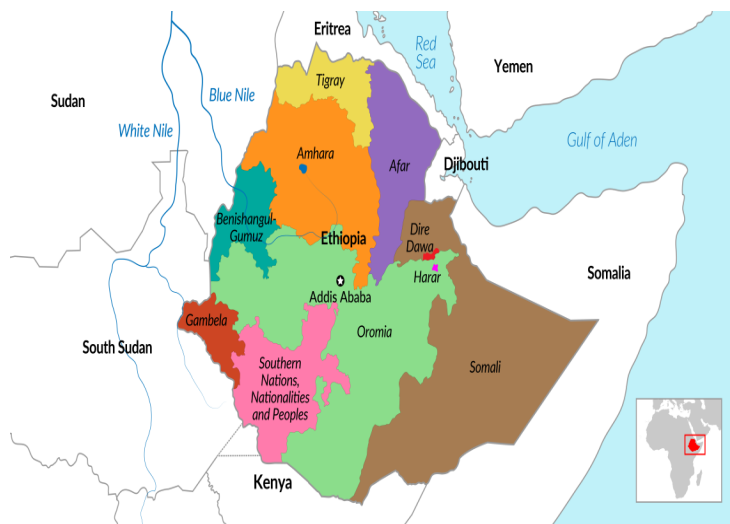


project, provided several months capacity building and institutional support to NEBE logistic department through workshops and delivered on-the-job training for NEBE logistics staff including trainings on warehousing.

## 2. Introduction of the project

### 2.1 Political background and context

Ethiopia is a cultural mosaic made up of over 80 different ethnic groups in a vast territory with 123 million citizens.<sup>2</sup> The country has a federal system with ten regional governments, many of which have border disputes or are experiencing unrest. Interethnic tensions, power dynamics, and historical context are essential to understanding all aspects of Ethiopia's political, economic, and social affairs.



Since the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018 was appointed, following a wave of protests against the government and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which was in power since 1991, the country has undergone through a substantial political and economic reform agenda called "Ethiopia: A New Horizon of Hope".

Among the important reforms, the review and amendment of the electoral law<sup>3</sup> for the holding of free, fair and credible elections was introduced and the appointment<sup>4</sup> of a new Board of Directors of the National Election Board (NEBE) headed by Ms Birtukan Mideksa, a former judge and leading opposition.

In January 2019, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker met with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed to discuss EU support to Ethiopia's reform process.

On this occasion, President Juncker stated “The EU supports the ambitious reform agenda in Ethiopia and is committed to step up its support to the country”.

Regarding the announcement of general elections to be held on 5 June 2021, the EU welcomed the commitment of the Ethiopian government to organize **credible and transparent elections** and expressed its readiness to continue supporting such a process. EURECS + is part of the EU

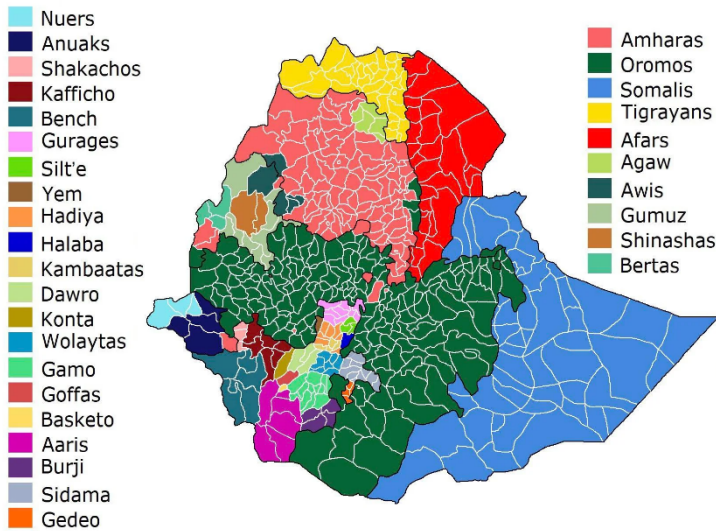
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/>

<sup>3</sup> Parliament unanimously passed the 2019 Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics law.

<sup>4</sup> 2019

response to provide support to the country which initiated reforms to enhance the democratic process in Ethiopia.

**Nationality/Ethnicity Map of Ethiopia** (Majority/Plurality)



It is in this context that the project, entitled "European Response to Electoral Cycle Support in Ethiopia" was launched. EURECS Ethiopia was financed by the EU and Germany and was launched by ECES and its partners in Addis Ababa in October 2019. The main objective of EURCES was: to strengthen the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to raise the profile of an independent, credible and effective institution that will

deliver inclusive and democratic electoral processes in Ethiopia.

However, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic further complicated the already fraught political situation in the country, and the general elections originally scheduled for 29 August 2020, widely seen as a crucial step in the political transition, were postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 31 March 2020, the NEBE declared that it would not be able to administer 'free and fair elections' while Covid-19 remained a public health threat. Hence, Ethiopia became the first African country to postpone parliamentary elections due to COVID-19 related State of Emergency (SoE) declared in March 2020.

The federal parliament then voted to extend the terms of parliamentarians, including Abiy's, which were due to expire in October 2020. This decision was rejected by the Tigrayan leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated the EPRDF, and which has been gradually sidelined since Abiy came to power.

The TPLF held its own regional elections in September, which were considered illegal by the government sitting in Addis Ababa.

On November 4, 2020, the Ethiopian federal government launched a military operation in the region of Tigray that had defied its authority for months.

It is against this background of pandemic and governmental military operations in the Tigray that the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) finally announced that Ethiopia will hold its legislative and regional elections on June 5, 2021.

As the organization of the 2021 elections<sup>5</sup> were considered a key test of the unfolding reform agenda but required preconditions in terms of security and operational capacity for the Electoral board, the German development cooperation took the decision to provide further support to the NEBE through EURECS+ project.

The EURECS+ project was therefore set up to complement EURECS Ethiopia to support NEBE in its efforts to organize elections under COVID-19 and to address some of the logistical challenges related to the delivery of election material in a context where the NEBE was facing huge challenges to deliver the election materials due to the war in the Tigray.

## 2.2 Overview of the project

The project is described in the Grant contact between ECES and the European Union, represented by the European Commission - FED/2021/423-714 as complement to the ‘European Response to Electoral Support in Ethiopia (EURECS<sup>6</sup> Ethiopia, FED/2020/415-432).

Due to the conflict in Tigray, NEBE did not have the logistical and operational capacity to transport the electoral material to all regions of Ethiopia and initially the deployment of the electoral material for the general election in Ethiopia was to be done by the Ethiopian army.

The Chairperson of the Electoral Commission sought technical and financial support from its international partners and approached the German Embassy as it was already involved into the support to the electoral process through EURECS. Germany agreed to finance NEBE's needs to cover the logistical gap for an amount of EUR 3 920 000 and complement the activities that were already implemented into EURECS.

Therefore, the Project EURECS+ was financed by the German Development Bank ( KFW ) on behalf of the German government/ cooperation through the EU Delegation to Ethiopia<sup>7</sup> which accepted to facilitate the process.

For administrative and procedural reasons, an additional contractual agreement<sup>8</sup> was established between the EUD and ECES to complement EURECS activities and support NEBE with operational and logistical support.

The EURECS agreement between the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) and the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia was signed the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019/ EURECS +

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<sup>5</sup> The bicameral Parliament includes the 153-seat House of Federation, whose members are elected by state assemblies to five-year terms, and the House of People's Representatives, with 547 members directly elected to five-year terms ( source <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2023>)

<sup>6</sup> EURECS is implemented by ECES along the lines of a specific and copyrighted approach developed by ECES entitled the European Response on Electoral Cycle Support (EURECS- Ethiopia - FED/2020/415-432)

<sup>7</sup> The scheme for transferring the money was as follows: Minister of Cooperation transferring the money to the KW and the KW going through the delegation as contracting authority.

<sup>8</sup> Source EUD in Ethiopia .13 April 2023.

was signed 13 April 2021. with an implementation that would start in April 2021, only 2 months before the scheduled elections of June 2021.

The implementation of the project is carried out in partnership with the Forum of Federations which was established in the country since 2008 and registered as an international organization<sup>9</sup> and with GOInnovation<sup>10</sup> which has been in Ethiopia since 2006 working closely with national civil society organizations<sup>11</sup> in response to their need for individual, team, and organizational capacity building.

Initially, EURECS + project was foreseen to start on April 13, 2021, for a 12-month period of implementation but it was extended through two no - cost extension. The implementation period of the action has been 24 (twenty-four) months from April 13, 2021, till April 13, 2023.

### 2.3 Overall objective and specific objective of the project

NEBE is the main beneficiary of the EURECS+ project activities.

The overall objective of the action is to contribute to increased transparency and credibility on the electoral process and to instill a higher degree of public trust in the NEBE.

The project is designed with 3 areas of interventions:

- 1) NEBE’s capacity to manage a credible electoral process amid the global pandemic crisis is enhanced and polling stations equipped to mitigate the COVID-19 spread.
- 2) Electoral stakeholders and the population sensitised on the acceptance of election results and are aware of the legal channels for election complains.
- 3) The electoral material is delivered on time contributing to the proper conduct of elections.

### 2.4 The intervention logic of EURECS + with Judgement criteria (JC)

The intervention logic is the set of the assumptions explaining how the intervention was expected to meet its objectives and produce the expected effects.

Table 1: Intervention Logic

Outcome	Component	Assumptions	Judgement criteria (JC)
1	NEBE’s capacity to manage a credible electoral process amid the global pandemic crisis is enhanced and polling stations equipped to mitigate the COVID-19 spread	If NEBE is equipped with means and tools to deal with the COVID-19 and the population duly sensitized on preventive measures against the pandemic, then it will ensure that the process is held in a healthy environment.	Capacity of the project to support NEBE in addressing the Covid 19 crisis during the election period.

<sup>9</sup> Under agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>10</sup> <https://go-innovation.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Also, in partnership with the Unity University, the first independent university of Ethiopia

2	Electoral stakeholders and the population sensitized on the acceptance of election results and are aware of the legal channels for election complains.	If the electoral stakeholders and populations are sensitized on the acceptance of the election results and are aware of the legal channels for election complains, this will contribute to avoid unrest and election related violence.	Capacity of the project to support the acceptance of the election results to avoid unrest and election related violence.
3	The electoral material is delivered on time contributing to the proper conduct of elections.	If the elections materials is delivered on time, this will contribute to the proper conduct of the elections	Capacity of the project to support NEBE to deliver the elections material on time.

## 2.5 Evaluation questions

For each of the evaluation criterion and building on the specific areas of analysis specified by the TORs, the evaluation expert has developed a comprehensive set of research questions, then regrouped and consolidated them into overarching Evaluation Questions.

The 6 Evaluation Questions are set out in the table below, arranged by individual evaluation criterion. These overarching questions will structure the way the evaluation will test the hypotheses and assumptions in the theory of change underpinning the project during each phase of the evaluation.

Table 2 : Evaluation questions

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
RELEVANCE	EQ1: To what extent is EURCES + design aligned with existing work, priorities, and needs of the NEBE to conduct the electoral process in Ethiopia?
COHERENCE	EQ2: To what extent is the project complementary to other initiatives of the EU, EU Member States and relevant cooperation partners?
EFFECTIVENESS	EQ3: To what extent has the support provided by the project increased the capacity of the NEBE to deliver its mandate?
EFFICIENCY	EQ4: To what extent have the implementation modalities of the project leading to an efficient use of the donor's resources?
IMPACT	EQ 5: Is there any evidence that the project's support achieved significant and sustainable higher-level change, or other effects?
SUSTAINABILITY	EQ 6: To what extent will the main beneficiary of the intervention be able to sustain the results of the project?

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Relevance: To what extent is EURCES + design aligned with existing work, priorities, and needs of the NEBE to conduct the electoral process in Ethiopia?

The overall design of EURECS+ is very relevant in the context of Ethiopia in 2021, as it addresses the operational needs of NEBE, which faced major difficulties in organizing the June 2021 general elections due to the Covid 19 pandemic and the war in Tigray.

On March 31, 2020, Ethiopia was among the first African countries to postpone its general elections scheduled to be held on August 29, 2020 due to the outbreak of the coronavirus across the country and subsequent travel restrictions put into place.

In response to the postponement, the federal parliament voted the extension of terms of parliamentarians, including Prime Minister Abiy's, which were due to expire in October.

The decision was rejected by the Tigrayan leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which had organized their own regional elections in September 2020. These elections were considered as illegal by the federal government of Ethiopia which launched a military operation in the Tigray on November 4, 2020.

Since then, the postponement of the September elections, which triggered the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia, has been widely seen as a trigger fueling the civil war in Ethiopia.

To avoid a new political crisis and an escalation of ethnic tensions in the country, NEBE, which was fully responsible for the conduct of the elections, announced the general elections to take place on 5 June 2021 as to not postpone them indefinitely, despite the operational challenges posed by the COVID crisis and the ongoing conflict in Tigray. The State of Emergency Law enacted in April 2020 as a legislative response to regulate COVID-19 restrictions was revoked by August. Instead of the State of Emergency Law, the Ethiopian Institute of Public Health issued directive N°30/2020 to prevent the spread of COVID.<sup>12</sup>

The announcement of the election date was the starting point for the implementation of many activities planned in the EURECS project, and in particular, to respond to the extensive needs of the electoral commission in terms of operational support.

Since its reform in 2019, NEBE was notoriously perceived as a frail institution; under-staffed and under-resourced and therefore the biggest challenges for NEBE were organizing credible elections while:

<sup>12</sup> In the directive, social distancing and preventive practices were defined as the main health protective measures that are adopted and applied by people to protect themselves and others from contracting disease such as COVID-19

- addressing the Covid 19 crisis during the election period
- avoiding unrest and election related violence
- delivering the sensitive and non-sensitive election materials to the constituencies on time.<sup>13</sup>

The design of EURECS + was tailored-made to address these challenges of NEBE in the context of 2021 elections and EURECS design continued to be highly relevant until the end of the implementation period.

In past elections, the Ethiopian Federal army was responsible for the delivery of the sensitive and non-sensitive material for NEBE. However, in the 2021 context, the army was involved in the Tigray conflict and NEBE could not get the logistical support required, in particular transportation support. As such, NEBE requested support from International Development Partners (IDPs) and the German Cooperation responded to mobilized funds to support specific operations. This included the logistics for the delivery of sensitive and non-sensitive material through ECES.

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The overall design of EURECS+ is very relevant as it has provided essential support to NEBE after the 2019 democratic reform process.

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While the NEBE was initially conceived as "an independent and autonomous body for the conduct of elections with its own legal personality", the 5 polls that were conducted by NEBE since 1993 revealed significant weaknesses that undermined the credibility of the electoral process and fueled the opposition's discontent over the years.

With the wave of reforms, NEBE was restructured in 2019 with a view to establishing itself as a credible, effective and independent institution, capable of distancing itself from government interference and thus organising free, fair, credible and peaceful elections under the overall leadership of former judge and dissident Birtuka Mideska. The reforms were seen as a unique opportunity to promote a peaceful transition to democracy, similar to the 1991 electoral process. Expectations on the 2021 elections were very high as the starting point for a fundamental shift in the conduct of elections in Ethiopia after the reform process initiated by the Government of Ethiopia. The support to NEBE was very relevant as it was the first time Ethiopia had an independent body fully responsible for the organization of elections.

EURECS+ is aligned with the objectives and priorities of the Ethiopian government, as its goal is in line with the roadmap of the reform program "Ethiopia: A new horizon of hope" which states that political reforms and economic policies aim to enhance democracy and the rule of law; and scaling up job creation and competitiveness.

As the main objective of the project is to contribute to increased transparency and credibility on the electoral process and to instill a higher degree of public trust in the NEBE its three main

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<sup>13</sup> Acknowledging the fact that the military trucks, who usually transports and secure the election material to the polling stations across the country were not available. They had been deployed in Tigray.

components, the interconnected result areas of EURECS + are the following: Transparency and accountability, electoral results acceptance and contribution to electoral operations.

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EURECS + design is in line with the EU's policy and strategic objectives to support Ethiopia's reform process, to strengthen the democratic process.

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Democracy support is at the centre of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU's development cooperation with its partners countries. The EU provides extensive support to initiatives and programs that seek to develop and consolidate human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law in partners' countries. The EU believes that Ethiopia's sustainable development should be underpinned by continuous democratization process<sup>14</sup>.

EURECS, then EURECS +, were crafted as innovative and alternative delivery mechanism to implement electoral and democracy assistance activities that are consistent with the EU's values and policies.

These two projects are fully aligned with the EU policy and strategic objectives to support the Ethiopia's reform agenda and democracy support.

Lately, the EU Delegation in Ethiopia has expressed concern about the significant commitment of donors to support NEBE logistics when it is primarily the responsibility of the Ethiopian government to ensure that the cost of election logistics will be adequately covered by the state budget.<sup>15</sup>

This is a valid point. However, the evaluation finds that in the context of Ethiopia in April 2021 with COVID still affecting movement and the crisis in Tigray, that, the support of EURECS+ was very relevant and remained relevant until the closure of the project, to avoid the interruption of the electoral process.

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The design is in line with the policy and strategic objectives of the Government of Germany to support Ethiopia's reform process and strengthen democratic institutions of Ethiopia.

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As per the Federal Foreign office of Germany, <sup>16</sup> *“the military conflict in the north of the country, which was fought between November 2020 and November 2022, substantially set back the country's previously promising achievements in this regard. Due to the conflict,*

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<sup>14</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ethiopia/1186/ethiopia-and-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ethiopia/1186/ethiopia-and-eu_en)

<sup>15</sup> This issue will be developed under the chapter sustainability.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/ethiopia/209410>



*development cooperation was refocused on people-oriented activities, and measures were added to promote human rights, good governance and democracy-building.”*

Therefore EURECS + as it has been strengthening NEBE operational capacity is quite relevant for the German government and the KfW<sup>17</sup>. The project is consistent with the priorities and policies of the Federal Republic of Germany which is consistent with the strengthening of democratic institutions such as NEBE and the consolidation of human rights.

### 3.2. Coherence: To what extent is the project complementary to other initiatives of the EU, EU Member States and relevant cooperation partners?

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Between EURECS and EURECS+ and the Prevention, mitigation and management of election-related conflicts and potential violence (PEV) the synergies are quite high, and activities are complementary.

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It is noticeable that since 2019, the EU has<sup>18</sup> engaged quite a number of resources to support the democratic process in Ethiopia. The EUD has been involved in institutional capacity building of NEBE (EURECS and EURECS +), prevention of electoral violence through a CSO platform called coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Election (CECOE), capacity building of political parties (the Institute for Multiparty Democracy) and, promoting national dialogue.

The EU had a five-pronged election support approach of which logistics support and capacity strengthening with NEBE were two elements, the other three being support to CECOE on prevention of electoral violence: working through the Institute for Multiparty Democracy on political parties, and a focus on National Dialogue.

- European Response to Electoral Cycle Support in Ethiopia (EURECS Ethiopia) (16.55M EURO, funded by the European Union under the European Development Fund (EDF) and by KfW on behalf of the German government and implemented by ECES);
- Prevention, mitigation and management of election-related conflicts and potential violence (PEV-Ethiopia) (3.6M EURO, funded by the European Union under the IcSP-FPI and implemented by the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES);
- Supporting the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue (1.8M EURO, funded under IcSP-FPI and implemented by the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD);

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<sup>17</sup> KfW which is one of the world's leading promotional banks committed to improving economic, social, and environmental living conditions across the globe on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany and the federal states since 1948, the support which was provided to NEBE through EURECS + was very relevant.

<sup>18</sup> For an overall amount of 26 million (22.95M EUR+ 3.9 of EURECS+ ).

- Establishing an environment for inclusive, knowledge-based dialogue on the political process in Ethiopia (1M EURO, funded under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace of the Foreign Policy Instrument (IcSP-FPI) and implemented by International IDEA.

The analysis of these interventions shows very strong links between EURECS + and EURECS. The important level of synergies is quite visible between the two projects supporting NEBE.

While EURECS was designed to provide NEBE with institutional support with a long-term approach, EURECS + was designed to address some of the emergency logistical challenges that obviously could not be solved by EURECS. It is noticeable that EURECS design was limited in its capacity to adapt indefinitely to the needs of the NEBE, which few months prior to the elections were marked by a gap to cover the logistical aspect of the elections. EURECS evaluation reported that in 2021, to the countdown of the elections, NEBE needed a lot of support in terms of planning, logistics and operations and all activities were conducted in a fast-paced environment where many priorities collided. This presented a real challenge for EURECS which was aligned with the NEBE agenda and very often suffered from change of schedule and unexpected requests. It is in this context that EURECS + was designed as an extension of EURECS to fill NEBE gaps and support NEBE operations.

The current analysis of the activities of EURECS and EURECS+ show clearly that there is an internal division of tasks between these two projects. The two interventions share the same overall objective which is to contribute to increased transparency and credibility on the electoral process and to instill a higher degree of public trust in the NEBE, the same human resources, and an important amount of division of costs. The level of coherence is very high between these two projects as these interventions are complementary to each other. EURECS + is designed as an extension of EURECS and to support gaps recognized in the EURECS project design that emerged due to conflict and COVID.

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External coherence and synergies have been established between the UNDP, IFES and ECES at the early stage of the electoral process and have gradually increased as donor resources have become scarcer after the 2021 general elections.

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In 2019, at the early stage of the electoral process planning, an electoral dashboard was established to support the division of tasks between the three Development Partners involved: The EU and the German Cooperation (ECES), UNDP<sup>19</sup> (SEEDS) and USAID (IFES), all supporting NEBE to organize the next general election, this dashboard has been an essential coordination tool to avoid overlapping in the activities and for a clear allocation of funds.

While it seems acknowledged that at the beginning of the implementation of EURECS in 2019, there might have been institutional competition between the three NEBE partners, it is important to stress that when EURECS + started in 2021 after that the elections had been

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<sup>19</sup> Supporting Elections for Ethiopia 's Democracy Strengthening (UNDP Seeds 2019 – 2021 )

delayed several times, the relationships between the partners were coordinated with a very clear delimitation of tasks.

After the conflict ceased in Tigray, the coordination among partners supporting NEBE proved very useful and even increased efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery. Efficient information sharing and co-ordination between partners appeared as very important, but also very useful in managing the resources that were to be made available to NEBE.

This factor is positive and facilitates task sharing and the implementation of joint activities particularly between ECES and the UNDP; both organizations involved into the deployment of the electoral material in the various regions of Ethiopia. One of the lessons learned from this partnership is that increased communication among donors, can avoid duplication of activities and help NEBE - and donors - to adopt a rational and cost-effective approach in a context where NEBE's budget is not clearly defined.

### 3.3. Effectiveness: To what extent has the support provided by the project increased the capacity of the NEBE to deliver its mandate ?

The project was designed with 3 Outcome areas of interventions which are:

- Enhanced capacity of NEBE to manage a credible electoral process amid the global pandemic crisis and polling stations equipped to mitigate the COVID-19 spread.
- Electoral stakeholders sensitized and aware on free and fair election processes and the legal channels for filing election complaints.
- Timely delivery of electoral material is delivered on time contributing to the proper conduct of elections.

The following activities were implemented to reach results and ultimately achieve the desired outcomes in the three-key area of interventions:

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Outcome 1 – NEBE ‘s capacity to manage a credible electoral process amid the global pandemic crisis is enhanced and polling stations equipped to mitigate the COVID-19 spread.

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Activities in this outcome area were designed to support NEBE in organizing and managing the polling during the global pandemic. NEBE was expected to take measures to enhance transparency at all levels of the electoral administration to guarantee its accountability and to adequately sensitize on and safeguard the health and security of voters during the COVID-19 crisis, as per the prescription of the Ethiopian Institute of Public Health directive N°30/2020 to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

The table below shows EURECS+ deliveries in the component 1 to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Table 3: EURECS + activities and deliveries since April 2021 in the component 1

	Activities	Level of achievement
Activity 1.1	Procurement of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for election day	
Result 1.1	Personal Protection Equipment procured, and the targeted polling stations duly furnished. 1,375,000 PPE Masks and 220,000 hand sanitizers (500 ml) delivered to NEBE for the June 2021 election. The material was split into smaller manageable deliveries to accommodate the shortage of storage at NEBE.	High Achievement - activity completed.
Activity 1.2	Development and dissemination of a special guide on the use of PPE. This activity initially anticipated the need for development and dissemination of a special guide on the use of PPE. This directive included protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the safety of electoral stakeholders including voters, election officials, candidates, CSOs	
Result 1.2	This activity was not implemented as NEBE had already developed a specific directive 9/2013 to prevent COVID-19 spread in the electoral process.	Activity not implemented (on NEBE request)
Activity 1.3	Conduct a media campaign on mitigation measures against COVID-19.	
Result 1.3	This activity was not implemented as NEBE had already developed the specific directive 9/2013 to prevent COVID-19 spread in the electoral process.	Activity not implemented on NEBE request

Outcome 1: Outcome 1 was achieved. EURECS + was effective to provide NEBE with PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), masks and hand sanitizers, to prevent the risk of contracting COVID -19 on election day. The interventions were a priority for the NEBE which was expected to comply with the WHO and EPHI/FMOH COVID- 19 guidelines during the electoral process.

The procurement process was organized by ECES who engaged three domestic suppliers to provide PPE to the NEBE for the 2021 June Elections. According to the ECES stakeholders interviewed, one of the biggest challenges of this component was to deliver such a large quantity of items including the sanitizers<sup>20</sup> in a very short time frame to ensure all areas of the country were covered.

The overall amount spent by ECES to implement this component is EUR 467,096.27 which represents 12.69 % of the budget of EURECS+.

<sup>20</sup> This posed a real difficulty for one of the supplier of the sanitizer which could not provide all requested quantities. This situation obliged ECES to go to the second bidder.

## Outcome 2: Electoral stakeholders and the population sensitized on the acceptance of election results and are aware of the legal channels for election complaints.

The second stated Outcome of EURECS + was designed to ensure that electoral stakeholders would understand the complaint mechanisms available given the national fragile security situation and the tight electoral calendar released by NEBE. This context posed a risk of misinformation and irregularities during the electoral process which could have led to unrest and election related violence. Therefore, communication and outreach campaigns were identified in the design of EURECS + as important elements to inform on the legal tools made available to the population to address disputes on the election results. This activity was to be implemented in synergy with the Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) training of EURECS.

The table below provides an overview of the activities and results achieved to reach Outcome 2 of EURECS+. Figures show that NEBE's priority focused on the outreach awareness campaign to mobilize the voters in order that they cast their votes instead of a campaign on acceptance of the results.

Table 4: EURECS + activities and deliveries since April 2021 in the component 2

	Activities	Level of achievement
Activity 2.1	Awareness campaign on acceptance of the election results	
Result 2.1	At NEBE's request, the outreach activities have been modified. ECES contracted Zeleman Production to support the setting up of 16 billboards and media placement which were deployed across Addis Ababa to maximize the visibility of NEBE's get-to-vote campaign in June 2021 election mostly in Addis Ababa. The campaign objective was to encourage the voters to cast their votes in order to exercise their democratic rights. <sup>21</sup> A voter education expert was hired by EURECS+ to support NEBE outreach awareness campaign. Zeleman Production company was initially pre-selected from a throughout joint evaluation process done in January 2021 with UNDP and ECES under EURECS project that short listed several companies. Then ECES through the EURECS project had launched a negotiated procedure. Additional requests from the beneficiary were	No achievement in outreach activities on acceptance of the election results.  50 % achievement in outreach campaign to mobilize the voters <sup>22</sup> in Addis Ababa in June 2021 and in the Somali region in September 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Extract from the first interim narrative report – 2022 .

<sup>22</sup> As there was no indicators to measure the level of completion of this activity, which was not in the logical framework, it appears difficult to measure the exact level of achievement. Efforts have been provided by EURECS + to adapt to NEBE request.

	made in June and September 2021, for billboards and media placement and as a continuation of the process new negotiated procedures were done under EURECS+.	
	For the September elections, Zeleman Production was engaged by EURCES+ to advertise and produce PLC and provided services with a series of as well as billboard broadcasts through South FM, South TV, NABAD TV and Somali TV.	
Activity 2.2	Mediation workshop with influential community members on the acceptance of election results. Communities are aware of legal instruments available in case elections are contested.	
Result 2.2	This activity was not implemented as it was not prioritized by NEBE.	Activity not implemented (on NEBE request)

In conclusion component 2: The table above shows that the contribution of EURECS + to support an awareness raising campaign on the handling of complaints regarding election results was not implemented. Instead, under this component, initial planned activities were switched to increase voter turnout through an awareness campaign upon NEBE request.

In terms of effectiveness, this shows that EURECS + adopted a very flexible approach to adjust continuously to NEBE’s needs and priorities during the life of the project.

This approach reinforced NEBE’s ownership over the activities. This approach is in line with the prescriptions of the contractual agreement that was signed between ECES and the EU Delegation in Ethiopia on July 2021 which required ECES to implement the activities in close coordination with the NEBE. However, it should be noted that NEBE was more concerned with voter turnout than creating awareness on complaint mechanisms.

The amounts spent under this component is EUR 193,458.99 for the awareness campaign and EUR 53,445.16 for the mobilization of a voter education expert who assisted NEBE in its voter mobilization campaign. The total amount spent in this component is EUR 246,904.15 which represents 6.71% of EURECS+ expenditure.

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### Outcome 3: The electoral material is delivered on time contributing to the proper conduct of elections.

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The component 3 was designed to provide an operational support to NEBE to deliver the election material<sup>23</sup> for the 2021 elections<sup>24</sup>. This activity included the procurement of transport

<sup>23</sup> Sensitive and non-sensitive material: ballot papers, ballot boxes, voter screens..

<sup>24</sup> EURECS + on the request on NEBE organized the deployment of trucks and plane in two referendums as well.

with the mobilization of 1228 trucks and 13 charter flights to deploy the elections material in the constituencies for the June and September 2021 general elections<sup>25</sup>. Transportation supported also the logistics required for the two referendums which took place in Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNPR) regions. The Project also ensured the retrieval of materials from the different regions following the June and September 2021 elections. Two transporters were selected<sup>26</sup> by EURECS + to deliver the electoral material namely Move one<sup>27</sup> and Habtamu<sup>28</sup> and 13 flights were mobilized to deliver the electoral material in Somalia and Gambella regions which were considered as sensitive areas.

These activities were implemented in close coordination with NEBE's logistic and operation department. As per the project documents design, an international expert specialized in electoral logistics was identified in April 2021 by EURECS + for a 6-month period<sup>29</sup> to provide NEBE advice on the procurement of transporters and on the planification for the deliveries of the electoral equipment's in the regions.

EURECS+ technical assistance was very useful for NEBE's logistical department to review the procurement plan, identify various transport companies that were capable to deliver the electoral material in a timely manner and support the development of a transportation logistics plan. One of the challenges working with NEBE was the limited previous experience of the EMB in the planification of the electoral operations<sup>30</sup>. Logistics and operations planning were essential for ensuring that equipment, staff, and communications methods were in place to conduct voting. As EURECS + activities were implemented upon NEBE request, the projects often faced challenges to adapt to NEBE last minute requests to organize the general elections. This issue was raised several times by the stakeholders<sup>31</sup> during the mid-term review of EURECS.

However, the table below gives a strong indicator that the level of achievement of Outcome 3 was very high despite the various challenges encountered by the project to deliver the election material throughout the country under a very tight time schedule, despite the road infrastructures and the security constraints.

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25 Elections of the members of the House of Peoples' Representatives

26 Based on market assessment and list of providers received from Ministry of Transport (MoT), the call was advertised on an online site with 16 companies participating in the tender. The evaluation process was managed by ECES. The contract winner's information was passed to NEBE for security vetting, then contracts were awarded accordingly.

27 Move one was selected to deliver the election material to all regions except Tigray, Gambella and Benishangul regions

28 Habtamu transporter was selected to deliver the election material to Gambella and Benishangul regions.

29 The expert was assigned in Ethiopia from April 2021 till October 21 and then worked home base till 2022.

30. Under the impulsion of reform process NEBE was totally restructured in 2019 with new board members, under a new electoral law and this presented a challenge by itself regarding the limited time which had been given to NEBE to build its capacity in various election skills prior to the general elections. The technical assistance assigned to NEBE provided important support to assist NEBE to understand proper procurement processes to be followed to supply in logistic and review the operational planning and logistic plan.

31 This issue has been identified in the EURECS midterm report in March 2021. "Most of the request are addressed at short notice and it require a lot of flexibly for the project to deliver. As a result, more and more requests are given to EURECS and some of these requests were not initially foreseen into the project document. The Development Partners accompanying NEBE were facing the same difficulties.

One of the factors that facilitated the level of implementation of the project is attributed, according to stakeholders interviewed, to the flexibility of the approach adopted by ECES. As per NEBE, the capacity of EURECS + to accommodate urgent requests was greatly appreciated. According to the expert in evaluation, the team’s extensive previous experience in the management of electoral operations worldwide has been a major factor in overcoming the logistical challenges in this complex environment. For the NEBE, the project implementation was tremendously facilitated by the availability of the projects team.

**Table 5 EURECS + activities and deliveries since April 2021 in the component 3**

	Activities	Level of achievement
Activity 3.1	Set up and procurement of operations and logistics for elections	
Result 3.1	Transportation of Electoral Material from Addis Ababa to the regions by trucks and airplanes Completed with all materials delivered to the Somali and /Gambella region	High Achievement
Summary of the transport by road to the regions: 1228 trucks mobilized to deliver the electoral material		
21 June 2021 general elections	-727 trucks were used for the deployment of electoral material for the June 2021 elections + 15 trucks were deployed to Gambella Region and 8 trucks were deployed to Benishangul Region <sup>32</sup>	
30 September general elections	-216 trucks were used for the deployment of electoral material for the September elections.	
Somali Retrieval 2022	-100 trucks were used for the Somali Retrieval to deploy the election material	
SNNPR Referendum of the 6 February 2023	-162 trucks were used from Addis Ababa NEBE warehouse to the SNNPR region in the countdown of the Referendum of 2023 to deploy the electoral material <sup>33</sup> .	
Summary of the transport by air to the regions: 13 charter flights were mobilized to deliver the electoral sensitive material from Addis Ababa to Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, Afar and Somali regions		
21 June 2021 general elections	7 aircrafts were used for June 2021 election comprising 3 different types due to weight / volume capacity <sup>34</sup> . Three locations were serviced by aircraft: Afar, Assosa and Gambella. Voting and training materials were uplifted to the various airports / airstrips and then collected by the transport contractor and delivered to the constituent locations.	

<sup>32</sup> Total: 23 trucks.

<sup>33</sup> Operations & training material, VR material and electoral sensitive materials with Move One

<sup>34</sup> The aircrafts were selected regarding the capacity of the airport



30 September 2021	Through Ethiopian Airline <sup>35</sup> 6 charter flights were utilized to deliver voter registration materials in August 2021 to Harari and Somali regions for the election that took place in September 2021.
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Achievement of Outcome 3: The table above shows that EURECS + contribution to support the delivery of the electoral material has been quite significant. EURECS + has been very engaged to support the election management body to plan and responsibly implement their operational tasks, especially to deliver the electoral materials through the procurement of trucks and planes all over the country.

As per the NEBE, the election materials arrived on time at the polling stations despite the numerous challenges encountered.

In terms of expenditure, provisional figures show that EU 1,892,034.21 (EUR 1,748,823.14 + EUR 143,211.07<sup>36</sup> ) were spent on logistics under this component to deliver the electoral equipment and retrieve part of it <sup>37</sup>. This amount spent under the component 338 represents of 51.41 % of the entire budget of the project.

In comparison to the other components, the figure below shows that logistical and operational support to the NEBE was the primary focus of EURECS + as it is reflected in the number of resources invested in Outcome 3. As per NEBE comments “it would have been difficult if ECES did not supported the electoral management body (EMB) and they are grateful for that.”

Conclusion on the budget expenditure per component: As of March, 2023, a few weeks prior the closure of the project, EURECS+, expenditures show that NEBE priorities for implementation were put into the logistical support to deliver the electoral material and to some extent, to address the COVID 19 during the electoral operations.

There is evidence that NEBE’s capacity in strategic management was enhanced by the project to support transparent, accountable, gender-responsive and rights-based electoral processes amid a global health crisis.

Table 5 : Expenditures in % on the overall budget

Component	Expenditures in % on the overall budget
1 Procurement and measures to mitigate the COVID 19 during the electoral operations	12.69 %

<sup>35</sup> Only the national airline company of Ethiopia could offer this service to ensure the national appropriation and the security level needed to transport electoral material. Moreover, the warehousing and packing of the electoral material imported by UNDP through Ethiopian airline was done in the warehouse of the Ethiopian airline at the national airport

<sup>36</sup> Expert logistic salary has to be added +143 000 Euros.

<sup>37</sup> The UNDP, under remaining funds will retrieve the non-sensitive material to the warehouses in a short while .

<sup>38</sup> A 30 Kva Generator was purchased under the projects for SNNPR referendum

A procurement has been done in December 2022 for the purchase of one Perkins 30 Kva Generator with transport and installation included. It has been delivered to Arba Minch city within the SNNPR region at NEBE regional office.

2 Awareness campaign on acceptance of the election results	5.26 %
3 Transport of the electoral material	54.28 %
4 HR and other expenditures	27.77 %

### 3.4. Efficiency: To what extent have the implementation modalities of the project leading to an efficient use of the donor's resources?

EURECS+ has been implemented under the direction of the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) to ensure efficient and cost-effective management of ECES led projects in Ethiopia.

EURECS + benefited from the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) which was established in 2019 in Ethiopia by ECES to implement the PEV project's activities and ensure information-sharing, synergies, and coordination mechanisms between ECES and EURECS in Ethiopia. The PCU functions as a coordinating hub and as a repository of knowledge, centrally placed in between the projects and the various stakeholders, beneficiaries and development partners connected to them. The PCU is led by the ECES representative in Ethiopia and Senior Electoral Administration Advisor, and mandated by ECES HQ, under the supervision of the Co-Founder and Executive Director of ECES, to oversee the implementation EURECS Ethiopia project in its various aspects.

The budget and arrangements mechanisms between EURECS and EURECS+ have been designed to ensure the best possible value for money and ratio costs/activities.

There are many synergies between EURECS and EURECS+ projects. As a result, both projects share operating costs, including staff members, premises and transport. All these measures of cost sharing are making the two projects administratively extremely competitive in terms of human resources and office sharing.

This is consistent with good management practice when two projects are managed by the same entities, have the same overall objective, have a high level of complementarity.

ECES' budget follows the same principles for all its projects, namely based on real costs with a provision for indirect costs of 7% (based on the total amount of eligible costs). That 7% allows for the costs related to indirect management of the project as well as costs related to project design and implementation, allowable by EU.

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EURECS + procurements were made in conformity with the EU PRAG regulation and adopted flexible procedures which apply in Ethiopia due to the crisis situation.

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Between the entry into force of EURECS + in April 2021 and the date of the general elections in June 2021, EURECS + had only three months to organise the various procurements. This posed a real challenge for the project to ensure that the suppliers would deliver the material on time before the elections. As Ethiopia was listed by the EU in as country in a crisis situation (conflict and fragility), EURECS + has been able to use flexible procedures to proceed to the various procurements and address the emergency situation.

As per the stakeholders interviewed, the project managed to do the procurement in a very efficient manner under negotiated procedures. This flexible approach contributed largely to the high level of effectiveness of EURECS + as it facilitated the delivery in a secured manner of the electoral sensitive material on time.

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The issue of visibility has been raised by the EUD and others development partners supporting the NEBE in the post-election period.

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In Ethiopia, issues of visibility are extremely sensitive when linked to the electoral process. NEBE has been reluctant to give visibly to the actions of its partners along the electoral process. In the context of 2021, given the uncertainties of the elections, the EUD in Ethiopia agreed for a minimum visibility of its actions to support the NEBE as NEBE expressed some reluctance, to be associated with foreign interventions. Therefore, when EURECS+ started there was an agreement of minimal visibility.

In the context of 2023, which is related to the post elections period, regarding the high level of European involvement in the Ethiopian elections, the issue of visibility has been raised by the EUD in Ethiopia.

The EU considers that its interventions to support the electoral process in Ethiopia should be more visible in the country particularly in some specific areas which are not sensitive.

The issue of visibility was shared by ECES, IFES and UNDP who jointly drafted a technical proposal to the NEBE with an approach which would give me visibility of the actions funded by the development partners.

### 3.5. Impact - Is there any evidence that the project's support achieved significant and sustainable higher-level change, or other effects?

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The support provided by EURECS + had a very important impact on the credibility of the 2021 general elections.

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The biggest impact of the support provided by EURECS + is to have directly supported the organization of credible<sup>39</sup> elections in June and September 2021 despite insecurity, registration problems, and other challenges that limited widespread acceptance of the outcomes as free and fair<sup>40</sup>.

EURECS + has contributed to the organization of credible elections in Somali for delivery and retrieval 2022 and in the referendum SNNPR the 6 February 2023<sup>41</sup>. A total of 46 political parties participated in the 2021 elections, fielding 9,505 candidates. An estimated 37 million people registered to vote, and some 90 percent of registered voters cast a ballot.<sup>42</sup>

The sensitive and non-sensitive electoral material<sup>43</sup> were adequately dispatched securely to the polling stations and the equipment to mitigate the COVID -19 spread were dispatched throughout the country.

The June and September 2021 parliamentary and regional elections were seen as an opportunity for the country to break from its past of undemocratic elections<sup>44</sup>. As NEBE was notoriously perceived as a frail institution prior to these public consultations, after the Tigray conflict, there was a certain level of skepticism on the capacity of the NEBE to organize credible elections amid the global pandemic crisis. Social cohesion in the country had gradually deteriorated due to ethnic division.

Therefore, these elections were a test for NEBE to demonstrate capacity to organize credible elections. The head of the African Union's election observer mission in Ethiopia, Olusegun Obasanjo, reports his team's findings that Ethiopia's legislative and regional elections were "conducted in an orderly, peaceful and credible manner<sup>45</sup>."

NEBE and several stakeholders acknowledged that without EURECS+ support, the electoral management body would not have been able to organize the June and September 2021 elections. One of the key stakeholders witnessed that "logistically it was impossible to organize the elections with the kind of resources NEBE had. NEBE would not have had the material on time, elections would have been postponed."

A further postponement of the elections would have had seriously damaged the credibility of the NEBE to conduct the electoral process as it was already perceived as frail after the 2019

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<sup>39</sup> African Union described the election as an improvement compared to the 2015 election and positively overall, urging the government to continue the commitment to democracy.

<sup>40</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2023>

<sup>41</sup> On 6 February 2023 a referendum was held in the Wolayita, Gamo, Gofa, South Omo, Gedeo, and Konso Zones, as well as the Dirashe, Amaro, Burji, Ale, and Basketo special woredas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNP) of Ethiopia, on whether the included areas should leave SNNP and form their own Region. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023\\_South\\_Ethiopia\\_Region\\_referendum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_South_Ethiopia_Region_referendum))

<sup>42</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2023>

<sup>43</sup> The National Election Board of Ethiopia was transporting election materials, including ballot papers, ballot boxes, blue boxes, voting screens, stationery kits, printed documents, manuals, forms, and PPEs for both training and operational use.

<sup>44</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2023>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/23/ethiopian-election-peaceful-and-credible-african-union-observers/>

reform process. Stakeholders consider that the postponement of the elections would have contributed to the deterioration of the consensus around the electoral process.

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EURECS+ contributed to strengthen the legitimacy of the democratic reform process in the eyes of the Ethiopian people.

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Several stakeholders shared their concern about the negative impact that would have had the postponement of the elections on the reform agenda that started in 2018. These elections were very important as they were the first elections to be held after the democratic reform process.

The polls were seen as a crucial step towards in the reform agenda. The success of the elections would help to create a positive democratic dynamic and their failure would deteriorate the consensus around the reform process. As the country was already fragmented after the first Tigray war<sup>46</sup>, the success of the elections was a key factor of stability and social cohesion<sup>47</sup>.

For one stakeholder “...the rather successful elections were an entry point to consolidate the reform process for further democratization.”

At the time being, an agreement signed by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian government on 2 November 2022 offers a real chance to end the Tigray war<sup>48</sup>. In this respect, stakeholders consider that Elections in the Tigray will have to be organized by the NEBE before the next 2027 general elections as other elections in specific regions<sup>49</sup> that could not be organized in 2021 due the insecurity which remained out of the control of the government<sup>50</sup>.

It is in the view of the expert that NEBE enhanced credibility is one of the factors that supports the regularization of the relationships between the Ethiopian central government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Due to security constraints and logistical challenges, several elections could not be organised in several region of the country during the 2021 elections. NEBE is expected to organize elections in several regions before the next 2026 electoral cycle. NEBE’s increased credibility after the general elections is one of the factors that will facilitate the outcome of these elections.

### 3.6. Sustainability. To what extent will the main beneficiary of the intervention be able to sustain the results of the project?

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46 The war was not limited to Tigray; there- fore, neither can the peace process be. In Ethiopia’s most populous states, Oromia and Amhara, ethno-nationalist forces have gained ground in recent years, fighting partly against the state and also against each other. ( Sources [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2023C14\\_EthiopiaPeace.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2023C14_EthiopiaPeace.pdf))

47 For one stakeholder interviewed “The project contributed to social cohesion in a country where communitarianism was a major issue. It helped to set standards and rules for the elections that took place throughout the country.”

48 [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2023C14\\_EthiopiaPeace.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2023C14_EthiopiaPeace.pdf)

49 Including parts of Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul Gum

50 Some areas plagued by insecurity remain out of the control of the government—such as parts of Oromia—while others have been under prolonged states of emergency, with heightened military presence and control, including parts of Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul Gumuz. (sources Freedom House report 2023)

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Although EURECS + was designed to provide emergency operational support to NEBE, with immediate and short-term effect, some elements of the project provide a degree of sustainability.

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- I. The expert in logistic hired for the project provided several months capacity building and institutional support to NEBE logistic department through:
  - On-the-job training for NEBE staff from the department of logistic by jointly planning, reviewing the procurement plan, implementing the activities to deliver the electoral equipment's in the region.
  - Workshops organized by the project technical assistance to strengthen NEBE capacity in planning and warehouse management and to overcome the lack of previous experience of NEBE human resources in electoral operations.
  
- II. Upon NEBE request, 30 KWh generator was purchased by the project to support the organization of the SNNPR Referendum of the 6 February 2023. This equipment is expected to also to be used for the NEBE during the next elections which will take place in the SNNPR.

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As EURECS + was designed as an emergency response to fill the gap in logistic NEBE in a context of pandemic and security crisis, the EU's commitment to support NEBE logistics will most likely be minimal in future electoral processes as the EU will most likely prioritize capacity development of the Electoral Management Body as a sustainable approach (EMB).

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For the EUD, it is unlikely that the EU will support the operational cost of the elections in future elections as there is an expectation that the Government of Ethiopia will cover the logistic aspect – under normal circumstance. This is what reflected from the interviews. The EU considers that it is the primarily responsibility of the Ethiopian government to ensure that the cost of the logistics will be adequately covered by the state budget.

In 2019, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) submitted a 3.7-billion-birr (\$132 million) budget for approval to the House of People's Representatives and in 2021, the estimated budget to conduct the June 2021 Ethiopian elections raised to 6.3-billion-birr (\$154 million). The increased of the elections budget was attributed to several factors including the COVID-19 crisis, the election postponement, the security deterioration of the country and to some extent, the difficulties to assess the real cost of the operations by the NEBE. Stakeholders working with the NEBE consider that last minute requests to the donors increased the cost of elections and they require a lot of adjustment from their programs to adapt to the needs of the NEBE. This approach is not sustainable in the long term.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

The project was designed in 2021 to fill the operational gap of the elections. It was implemented in a rather difficult context because of NEBE's apparent lack of preparation for the June elections, the health crisis of COVID-19, the degradation of the security context<sup>51</sup> and the unavailability of the army trucks which were initially supposed to carry and retrieve the electoral material in the various constituencies.

EURECS + during the 24 months of implementation from April 2021 to March 2023 demonstrated its capacity to adapt to NEBE's needs and manoeuvre in this complex environment. Notwithstanding, there is no doubt that the project was able to provide a considerable technical and logistical support to NEBE, to ensure that long due House of Peoples' Representatives elections take place in most of the constituencies of the country.

Analysis of the figures show that the project did not sufficiently address Outcome 2 which was designed initially to ensure that electoral stakeholders would understand the elections complaint mechanisms given the national fragile security situation and the tight electoral calendar released by NEBE. As the project activities were conducted upon NEBE request, this activity was not prioritized by the electoral management body.

Figures show that the technical assistance provided by EURECS + to NEBE was highly marked by the operational support. This significant operational commitment was foreseen in the project but for the EUD in Ethiopia, a more sustainable approach would be recommended to strengthen NEBE capacity to carry out elections.

The electoral cycle in Ethiopia 2020-2025 is not finished yet. In several constituencies, the elections could not be organised due to security concerns, irregularities in the voter registration process.<sup>52</sup>

As during the last past two years, NEBE was heavily dependent on Development Partners (DPs) to organise the 2021 general elections. NEBE has learned a lot from the implementation of the electoral activities and still need support to address some of its shortcomings.

In such a context, Development Partners (DPs) are strongly advised to support the NEBE in order to complete the 2020 -2025 electoral cycle and organise the elections that are due in several constituencies.

A particular focus should be given to support the organisation of the Tigray elections as they

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51 Five of the country's nine regional states are now plagued by violence with millions of internally displaced people and Insecurity has driven 2.4 million people out of their homes according to the United Nations

52 These constituencies are mostly in the Tigray (28 constituencies ) , and in other constituencies in Amhara Regional state, Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, Somali Regional state, Oromia Regional State

are considered as crucial to consolidate the peace process after the passing of the agreement<sup>53</sup> which was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front in November 2022. For many observers, elections in Tigray region are seen as a panacea to re-establish political legitimacy and authority, and to jump-start a new post-conflict political order<sup>54</sup>.

## 4.2 Recommendations and lessons learned

### 1. Electoral cycle 2020 – 2025

**Lessons learned:** The electoral cycle in Ethiopia 2020-2025 is not finished yet. In several constituencies, the election could not take place during the general elections because of security concerns and irregularities in the voter registration process.

**Lessons learned:** The last past years, NEBE was heavily dependent on Development Partners (DPs) to organise the elections.

**Lessons learned:** NEBE is a democratic institution that gained credibility in the last general elections in 2021 and the institution, after the 2019 reform, still need support in several key area.

**Recommendation:** Development Partners (DPs) are strongly advised to support NEBE to complete the 2020 -2025 electoral cycle and identify as soon as possible NEBE needs.

### 2. Tigray crisis and elections

**Lessons learned :** The elections are considered as crucial to consolidate the peace in Tigray after the peace agreement<sup>55</sup> which was passed between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

**Recommendation:** For the DPs, support the organisation of the Tigray elections.

### 3. NEBE and the planification of its electoral operations

**Lessons learned:** The lack of planning of its operations has led NEBE to submit last-minute requests to development partners (DPs).

**Recommendation:** Support NEBE logistic department with a long-term technical assistance:  
- to proceed to the “On-the-job training” (by jointly planning, review the operational plan, the procurement plan, the transportation plan.)

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<sup>53</sup> On 2 November 2022, a peace treaty was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), where both parties agreed to a "permanent cessation of hostilities" to end the Tigray War.

<sup>54</sup> <https://democracyin africa.org/post-war-election-may-trigger-new-conflict-in-ethiopia/>

<sup>55</sup> On 2 November 2022, a peace treaty was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), where both parties agreed to a "permanent cessation of hostilities" to end the Tigray War.



- Organise workshops to build the capacity of NEBEs in various planning and warehouse management to address NEBE shortcomings in planification.

#### **4. Coherence of interventions by development partners supporting NEBE**

**Lessons learned:** Efficient information sharing and co-ordination between partners was considered as very important, but also very useful in managing the resources that were to be made available to NEBE by the donors and in, addressing the lack of information on NEBE budget<sup>56</sup>

**Recommendation:** Strengthen the communication mechanism between the development's partners (DPs), under the leadership of NEBE, as all electoral stakeholders must be aligned to the same level of information (particularly on NEBE resources availability to organise its operations.)

#### **5. NEBE budget and logistic support**

**Lessons learned:** NEBE's budget was insufficient to cover all its costs for logistical operations.

**Lessons learned:** The EU considers that logistical support to NEBE and particularly the distribution of the electoral materials cannot be provided in the long term by development partners. It is not sustainable for the DPs.

**Lessons learned:** It is the view of the EU that the distribution of the election material should be primary the responsibility of the Ethiopian government under “normal circumstances”.

**Recommendation:** For future NEBE budgets preparation, DPs need to ensure that the Ministry of Finance understands what the core element of an election budget line should be<sup>57</sup>.

-Technical assistance can be provided to NEBE and ministry officials to jointly improve their election budgeting skills and increase NEBE budgets as per the needs of the electoral process.

**Recommendation:** The EUD and other donors supporting NEBE (USAID, UNDP) are encouraged to address this issue with the Ministry of Finance of Ethiopia to advocate for an increase in the NEBE budget. (For the EUD, through the political dialogue)

#### **6. NEBE and the visibility given to the interventions of the Development Partners**

**Lessons learned.** In Ethiopia, issues of visibility are extremely sensitive when linked to the electoral process. NEBE was reluctant to give visibility to the actions of its partners throughout the electoral process.

**Recommendation:** Development partners engage in discussions with NEBE on a jointly agreed visibility and communication plan for future interventions

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56 NEBE was reluctant to share openly its budget of the elections with the Development Partners (DPs)

57 EUD strong recommendation

## **ANNEXE 1 : List of stakeholders met from the 3 of March till the 13 of March 2021 – Addis Ababa**

### **ECES**

- Mme Monica Frassoni – president of ECES
- Mr Filiberto Sebregondi Filiberto - ECES

### **PCU**

- Mr David Le Notre: ECES Representative in Ethiopia
- Mr Franck Balme: ECES Coordinator in Ethiopia
- MR Maeregu Habtemariam: Electoral Advisor - Forum of Federation (Ethiopia)
- Mrs Melete Gebregiorgis: Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of ECES projects in Ethiopia
- MR Andrew Male: EURECS + expert in logistic and operations
- Mme Laurence.Carlier: Administrative and finance senior officer ECES Ethiopia
- Mr Scipion du Chatenet: Expert operations -ECES Ethiopia.

### **Donors**

- Mrs Miriam Skare - Program Officer - Elections, CSOs, Gender & Governance - Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia

### **NEBE**

- Mrs MERON MULUGETA (Head of logistic at NEBE)

### **Electoral Assistance Partners:**

- Mrs Katherine Green: Chief Technical Advisor UNDP
- Mrs Rakeb Abate: IFES Country Director



# EURECS+ ETHIOPIA

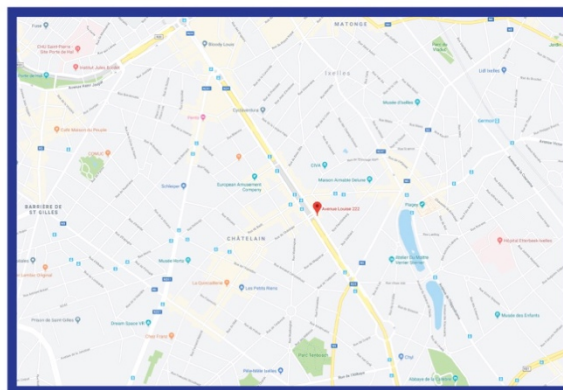
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