



## II Capacity Building Seminar "Latin America and the Caribbean and the future Horizon Europe programme"

The webinar "Latin America and the Caribbean and the future Horizon Europe programme" took place on 23 November, 2020 and was organised by the EU-LAC International Foundation in cooperation with the European Commission, the Argentina-EU Liaison Office, the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation (AUCI) and the LAC National Contact Points Network. The seminar was moderated by Nicolás Patrici from OBREAL-Global Observatory. The [recording](#) is available on the [website](#) of the EU-LAC Foundation.

One of the priority areas of the EU-CELAC Action Plan approved in 2015 is the promotion of academic and scientific cooperation between the two regions. European programmes, such as Horizon 2020, Marie-Skłodowska-Curie actions, as well as Erasmus+ programmes, are a few of the examples of EU funding programmes for research and innovation. On this basis, in 2019, the "1<sup>st</sup> Capacity Building Seminar of EU and LAC Institutions for Bi-regional Cooperation on Research" was held in Ljubljana, and due to the great interest shown by the member states, it was decided to hold a second edition in 2020. The objective of the seminar held in 2020 was to examine the lessons learned and good practices in accessing the resources of the Horizon 2020 Programme, and with these elements, enhance the possibilities of application to future projects financed by the Horizon Europe programme.

The webinar brought together a wide range of leading experts, including Dr Adrián Bonilla (Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation), Claudia Gintersdorfer (Head of the Americas Division of the European Foreign Service, EEAS), Mauricio Escanero (Head of the Mission of Mexico to the European Union and Ambassador of Mexico to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg), Claudia Romano (Manager of the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation, Coordinator of the Latin America and the Caribbean National Contact Points Network), Maria Alejandra Davidziuk (Ministry of Science and Technology of Argentina and NPC of Marie-Skłodowska-Curie and Horizon 2020) and Rita Lecbychova (Directorate General for Research and Innovation and International Cooperation, European Commission).

### Opening Remarks

#### Dr Adrián Bonilla, Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation

After introducing all the panellists and thanking them for their presence, Dr Bonilla explained that the idea of this event is to be able to work with different people from different government offices in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe to discuss the future of Latin America and its possibilities in the *Horizon Europe* programme, which is a programme that will replace *Horizon 2020*. It is a large-scale project of the European Union whose purpose is to support, finance and strengthen research and innovation in the European Union but understanding the idea of

knowledge, innovation and research as a global phenomenon, allowing other regions to participate. In this sense, in the same way that the predecessor project involved proposals from Latin America and the Caribbean and were associated with European counterparts, the new Horizon Europe project will open up this same possibility.

This meeting is part of the policies of the EU-LAC International Foundation to strengthen the capacities of its member states to be able, in this specific case, to apply more effectively to the possibilities of co-financing projects of the European Union with Latin American and Caribbean counterparts. This seminar is a service that the EU-LAC Foundation as an international intergovernmental organisation, made up of the countries of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, aimed at engaging with its members and strengthening the capacities it provides to member countries to expand their knowledge of opportunities for cooperation.

**Claudia Gintersdorfer, Head of Americas Regional Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS)**

Research and innovation represent very important axes of the European Union's relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean, and all initiatives that help to intensify this cooperation are fundamental. The current context of the COVID-19 crisis has further demonstrated the importance of international scientific cooperation to find treatments, vaccines and share scientific data that everyone can access. In this context, the efforts of the European Union have contributed more than one billion Euros to the global response, coordinating multilateral efforts to the crisis, tenders related to COVID-19 with counterparts from Latin America and the Caribbean, and the launch of the “European COVID-19 Data Platform” to exchange research results on a global level.

But also, beyond the field of health, research, and innovation, major priorities that Europe has with the Latin American and the Caribbean region, there are also the issues of the digital agenda and that of environment and climate. These priorities have also been discussed at the bi-regional meeting of High-Level authorities in Science and Innovation JIRI-SOM with broad participation from the two continents and will be discussed at the political level at the European Union-Latin America and Caribbean ministerial meeting to be held in Berlin on December 14, 2020, where the green and digital issues will also be addressed.

At the operational level, there is already intense cooperation through the Horizon 2020 programme, researchers from Latin America and the Caribbean have hitherto participated in around 400 Horizon 2020 projects, which shows the importance of the mobility of researchers and the close links between the regions. Looking to the future, the Horizon Europe programme will remain open to international cooperation by offering more opportunities to connect researchers and innovators. However, these programmes must also be known, and their information widely disseminated, for example by the Latin American National Contact Points Network (NCP).

## **Mauricio Escanero, Head of the Mission of Mexico to the European Union and Ambassador of Mexico to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg**

According to Ambassador Escanero, it is extremely important to align the efforts of bi-regional reflection promoted by the EU-LAC International Foundation with bi-regional cooperation and political dialogue efforts, for example with this type of seminars that seek to strengthen the capacities of Latin America and the Caribbean to take advantage of a programme as beneficial as Horizon 2020 and in the future Horizon Europe. This webinar is a clear example of an important cooperative effort in the political dialogue and bi-regional consensus on science, technology and innovation. This example could also be replicated in all aspects of bi-regional cooperation between the CELAC and the European Union.

Currently, consultation and bi-regional cooperation in science, technology and innovation is essential. For this reason, the Ambassador expresses his explicit satisfaction with the achievements of the relaunch of the joint CELAC-European Union initiative on research and innovation (JIRI) that took place on October 30, 2020, and which resulted, amongst others, in the strategic roadmap 2021-2023, which includes concrete actions to advance between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of cooperation in the areas of science, technology and innovation.

This platform will make it possible to enhance the efforts of the CELAC in terms of boosting the economy. In addition, science, technology and innovation have a fundamental role to play in health, the global response to COVID-19, and in a broader perspective, in exploring the technological frontiers that are currently opening through the technological revolution. Hence for the Latin American region it is very important to have tangible results and for this it is necessary to make a great effort of implementation and reconstruction of its capacities in order to take advantage of these opportunities and take them to a higher level.

It is therefore crucial that the political dialogue takes up the most important cutting-edge cooperation platforms and gives them additional impetus. Thence the importance of the ministerial meeting between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union that will take place in December 2020 in Berlin is underlined and there is hope that this meeting will take up the results of the topics of science, research and innovation and that its implementation is ensured in the strongest possible terms.

### **Presentations**

## **Claudia Romano, Manager of the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation and Coordinator of the Latin America and the Caribbean National Contact Points Network**

The Horizon 2020 programme and its successor Horizon Europe represent a fundamental possibility and potential for researchers in both Latin America and Europe. It also represents a possibility to the extent that both political authorities and researchers apply and use it in the best way, which is not necessarily done at present in its full extent. Therefore, the great challenge is to build institutionality in public policies, particularly in Latin America, which implies reducing the lack of awareness of programmes and initiatives, such as the EU-LAC Foundation, the liaison

offices with the EU or the Facility of the European Commission and raising awareness of the importance of Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and the designation of NCPs.

According to the Coordinator of the Network, the EU, CELAC and all their member countries have the obligation to democratise access to information because, believing in full democracy, it is necessary to provide all institutions with the instruments required to have information within all organisations, and not just the most powerful groups with previous experience. This support aims to train research institutions to work on the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe framework projects whilst increasing their success rate. On the other hand, it is also necessary not only to provide information that the project is "open to the world" but also to accompany the process and empower some countries in the knowledge of their own research capacity, and research and innovation structure.

The Horizon 2020 programme has been a fundamental opportunity to enhance the participation and implementation of projects in countries with previous experience, which have already participated in the previous six editions, and also for new countries in the region that for the first-time gain experience within the process. However, the number of projects under the Horizon 2020 programme and its predecessors that were coordinated by Latin American countries are scarce. There are only five countries in the region with agreements with the European Commission: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia. Out of these, the first three have had strong liaison offices and therefore have had specialised personnel to work on the programmes, resulting in greater participation and approval of Horizon 2020 projects in these countries.

Looking at data of participations and not projects, Latin America displays a higher number of participations of research centres in consortia of winning projects. Until 2020, 88 LAC participations were counted, particularly several by countries that had not previously participated in Horizon projects. In the Marie-Sklodowska-Curie programme, the great leader in Latin America is Argentina for they have had a clear political decision to work to disseminate, accompany and be with researchers to be present in European networks, and to build links in a more visible way.

In relation with the LAC NCP Network, out of the Latin American countries, 18 have signed an agreement of interest to promote participation and to increase the participation of countries of the region, as well as to promote capacity building. To achieve this, the National Contact Points both of the countries of Europe and Latin America play an important role. These are defined by the government authorities and have the obligation to transmit information about the calls and activities, raise awareness, advise and train. According to data from the European Commission for the month of October 2020, LAC has 341 NCPs in 27 countries of the continent, which represents an increase in the number of NCPs and participating countries, compared to data from the previous framework programme in 2014.

Besides increasing the visibility of the calls in Latin America, it is also necessary to reiterate to European teams the possibility of participation that the countries of the LAC region have in these Framework Programmes. In this context, the experience of calls whereby the participation of Latin American countries is mandatory represents an important tool to increase the region's participation in the Horizon 2020 and future Horizon Europe programmes. This lesson learned from CELAC was transmitted to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), meeting of the highest

political authorities of Latin America and Europe so that next calls for the Horizon Europe programme may, on one hand, favour international cooperation and, on the other, the participation of calls for third countries, not associated and specifically from CELAC, which have not previously participated or do not know how to do so. For example, currently in the 20 calls for the green pact, one specifically promotes and obliges the participation of Latin American countries. However, within CELAC, the identification of common areas is not very specific, especially because within the countries, the prioritisation of identified issues is difficult.

In order to improve these capacities and exchange experiences with calls in other LAC countries, the LAC NCP Network, which emerged from a project of the seventh framework programme led by Argentina, has organised 38 trainings in 17 countries since 2018 with participation of all countries of the region. With this, it has been achieved that many countries that previously did not, now do have NCPs, which allows them to disseminate information and makes the link at the local level, facilitating the application and approval in the calls. On the other hand, the countries of the region must, according to Ms Romano, find a solution to the problem of frequent staff turnover in their technical teams within the Ministries of Science and Technology. Consequently, it is essential to designate NCPs with prior knowledge of the operations of the programmes, as well as to periodically update the information of the persons responsible for the countries in the macro programme.

The LAC Network of NCP has the role of informing the political authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean that these programmes exist, providing them with materials and sensitising them, working in the shadows so that they can operate properly. On the other hand, it also works to increase the visibility of LAC countries in Europe and in LAC itself by providing them with a systematisation of data from approved projects and formed consortia to support the confidence of universities or research centres in their own capacities.

In the future, it will be necessary to continue working on political dialogue, especially for the Horizon Europe programme, and continue monitoring to provide relevant information to countries and national networks. For this reason, many countries in the region already today have their liaison offices with the European Union. In the future, the LAC Network of NCP will also continue to disseminate information, opportunities and training activities so that they could learn about the operation of the Horizon 2020 programmes and the Marie-Skłodowska-Curie actions. In addition to that, the network tries to link with other institutions such as the EU-LAC Foundation to promote transversal activities.

Responding to the question about how to create ties and consortia with unknown institutions, Ms Claudia Romano mentions that from Latin America and the Caribbean, there is an intense collaboration with Spain and Portugal due to their strong cultural ties and continuous cooperation. The motto of the European Union is to be based on stable and lasting relationships, which are established if the actors within a consortium have mutual trust in the performance of the work by the other parties. In order to overcome this difficulty and to be able to broaden the spectrum of cooperation with other institutions and other countries, each research institution must have a clear and precise profile of its contributions and capacities to be able to communicate them adequately with new partners. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a diaspora with many people living abroad who are linked to research centres, who can serve as

first contacts to create and strengthen new consortia. But on the other hand, it is also necessary to indicate to researchers despite having brilliant ideas, the Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe programme have, like all cooperation programmes, a very specific focus, which implies that it is not always the appropriate instrument for all research projects in the region. Proposals are submitted to a specific topic indicated by the European Union in the calls. There are also thematic networks in each of the areas, in which it is necessary to make available the profile of those who want to apply to the calls.

In this sense, the Network Coordinator reiterated the support that the NCP LAC Network provides to interested persons to enter consortia, also with still unknown new partners. The EU-LAC Foundation also has a team that can in particular insist on the responsibility of the political authorities of all the CELAC countries to designate the national points of contact, in order to support all researchers in the region.

**Maria Alejandra Davidziuk (Ministry of Science and Technology of Argentina and NPC of Marie-Skłodowska-Curie and Horizon 2020)**

From her perspective, it is important that countries create institutions, meet, exchange experiences and points of view, create an agenda as cohesive as possible and a road map. Hence, for example, the relaunch of the bi-regional dialogue achieved through the JIRI-SOM is of vital importance for the region, for it reveals all these elements.

Apart from the importance of having tenders and funding programmes, also the institutional processes clarifying the reasons for this international cooperation to take place are extremely crucial, especially since participation in the Horizon 2020 programme in research and innovation projects has decreased, analysing it in the long term. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, it is frequently the same institutions from a few countries that participate in Horizon 2020 projects. For this reason, it is important to exchange and incorporate these international cooperation mechanisms in a more inclusive way in the countries and institutions that tend not to participate.

Therefore, capacity building in LAC does not only mean informing about the possibilities and appointing the NCPs, but it also means understanding how the region collectively joins a highly European programme. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have the task of reflecting from a more critical perspective, also, what international financing means, and specifically in this case, the application for financing a project oriented to European priorities. This task also implies assuming a position from the moment of negotiations, to be able to expose which are the topics on the agenda of the region. In this sense, science and technology institutions should receive national and institutional support. This national accompaniment and guideline must also embed the positioning of the country and the research teams in this programme, the objectives to be achieved through participation, and the strategy of dialogue and negotiation with the European Commission. Therefore, to the extent that Latin American and Caribbean actors are able to build an agenda and define its purpose, it is possible to articulate and coordinate actions in terms of consortia, as required by the application for the current Horizon 2020 programme and the new Horizon Europe programme.

In this sense, from her point of view, the strengthening of capacities of actors interested in financing responds to the work in two dimensions that are useful to guide the efforts of the region. The first dimension is framed in the multilateral political sphere and implies working with a regional agenda in the negotiation spaces. These spaces should serve, then, to try to promote the inclusion of specific financing programmes for developing countries or developing countries in transition, and in these cases, facilitate their entry into the cooperation programmes offered by the European Commission. In this context, it is important to generate all the instruments and mechanisms prior to the SOM and, according to the speaker, the EU-LAC International Foundation can play a crucial role in the work prior to the political dialogue meetings.

The second dimension refers to the national level. Here it is necessary to take advantage of the existing capacities in the field of international cooperation in the different institutions within the countries and build new initiatives on that experience. Consequently, it is necessary to recognise the capacities acquired in the institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean, share information, and if possible, institutionalise good practices, trying to reach participation from the existing experiences within these institutions. To support this process, the liaison offices, international cooperation offices and different ministries and agencies should collaborate with each other and jointly with the NCP LAC Network, assistance could be given to the countries of the region that do not yet have a liaison office.

Responding to the question of how to emphasise these instruments of the European Commission and specify the discussions on common priorities within CELAC, Ms Maria Alejandra Davidziuk, indicates that Europe's proposals have a highly global character. If Latin America as a region wants to position itself as a strategic actor for Europe, it has to take an active role in global dialogues. For that, it is necessary to work on some issues that have not been emphasised much and include other countries and new voices from the region. Therefore, it is important to enter into dialogue with other regions and make alliances, apart from Europe, for example in south-south dialogues, to generate common agendas and join forces to bring these issues to the international discussion stage.

Referring to a question of the moderation, the speaker explains that cooperation in consortia with institutions or new countries without existing ties is difficult because it is necessary to generate trust and commitment between actors who do not know each other. Therefore, institutions often interact with the same instead of taking the risk of associating with an unknown institution, although it may have many potentials for collaboration. To support them in leaving their comfort zone, the liaison offices strengthen the exchange between national and regional institutions and encourage the need to demonstrate their own capacities and strengths to expand the range of institutions and countries with which they can collaborate in the field of science and technology.

**Rita Lecbychova, Directorate General for Research and Innovation and International Cooperation, European Commission**

Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are and will continue to be very important for the European Union, also in the field of research and innovation. Since 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a counterpart to the EU, has been a key actor for the bi-

regional association. Then, in 2016, both organisations committed to the joint construction of a Common Research Space based on three pillars: 1) mobility of researchers, 2) access to research infrastructure, and 3) joint confrontation of global challenges. More recently, the JIRI-SOM initiative, resulting in the roadmap of the 2021-2023 strategy, also contributed notably to the effort of both regions to work together, in areas such as health research, the green pact, digital transformation, and innovation.

Approaching the end of the Horizon 2020 programme, the European Commission has recently published its largest call in the programme, the European Green Deal Call, with a budget of around one billion Euros. The call has been designed as the first concrete research and innovation action in support of the European Green Deal and signals the strong commitment of the EU to achieve the massive environmental, social and economic transformation of the European Green Deal. The objective of this call is to produce tangible results, visible to citizens in a relatively short period of time.

The call for the European Green Deal and Horizon 2020 has eight thematic areas focused on: increasing climate ambitions; clean, affordable and safe energy; industry for the green and circular economy; energy and resource efficient construction; sustainable and smart mobility; protection of biodiversity and the ecosystem; zero pollution; and a toxic-free environment. There are also two horizontal areas of strengthening knowledge and empowering citizens. This call has innovation at its heart and is open to everyone. Due to the close alignment with the LAC region on these types of priorities, this is a really excellent opportunity for LAC researchers to participate in this call.

Focusing on the future, the vision of the new Horizon Europe programme refers to a sustainable, just and prosperous future for people and the planet, and to achieve this, it is inspired by the values that are at the heart of the creation of the European Union and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. This ambitious EU research and innovation framework programme also has the following objectives: to strengthen the scientific and technological base of the EU and the European research area; to boost Europe's capacity for innovation, competitiveness and employment; and to meet the priorities of citizens. Research and innovation are the best strategy to address the social, ecological and economic challenges that Europe is facing, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This programme, as it is proposed, aims to become the main pillar to achieve the objectives of the European Commission in the area of research and innovation and to support its political priorities. And consequently, one of the main areas of work of the Horizon Europe programme will be directed to projects for adaptation to climate change and the health of the oceans, these issues being two priorities. Building on the success and excellence of the Horizon 2020 Programme, new features will be introduced, in particular the articulation in clusters and associations and the participation of the European Innovation Council. The European Innovation Council, whose pilot phase has already started, will bring disruptive and ground-breaking innovations and help small and medium-sized start-ups to scale up their ideas.

The missions are another important development, and their main objective is to reconnect EU research with citizens by setting inspiring goals. Therefore, the EU and the Horizon Europe

Programme will remain open to the world but will do so in a much more focused and strategic way based on common interests and mutual benefits. Ms Lecbychova concluded her presentation with a quote from the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on the need to maximise the potential of EU exchange programmes to foster international cooperation in education, research and innovation.

### **Specific procedure to enter the programme**

Responding to the question of the moderation on the specific procedure to join the Horizon 2020 programme and the future Horizon Europe, the three speakers refer to the European Commission portal “Funding and Tenders” that contains all the public information about the calls and the thematic NCP of each country.

If assistance is required, national coordinators can guide delegations in this regard. In the case of universities, at the institutional level liaison offices, science and technology cooperation units, or the LAC Network of NCP can be consulted.

Unlike most calls for international cooperation, neither government nor NCP support is needed, but universities or research centres can present themselves directly and set up a consortium with European partners within the framework of the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes.

### **Closing Remarks**

#### **Dr Adrián Bonilla, Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation**

Although the Horizon Europe programme has not yet started, there is a multiplicity of actors from the European Union and from Latin America and the Caribbean who are very interested in completing projects and putting them into practice. Consequently, he encouraged the participants to recognise the good practices and experiences gathered throughout the Horizon 2020 programme, and joined the effort to continue collaborating with the parties and in the different aspects, to strengthen the area of cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and the countries of the European Union.

The idea of this webinar was, therefore, to channel the idea that a more intense projection of the bi-regional alliance is needed. In strategic terms, this is the axis of action of the EU-LAC Foundation. The presence of Latin America and the Caribbean in Europe and of Europe in Latin America is a presence that rises not only on foreign trade or economic variations, but very profoundly on the logic of research, higher education and the consequences that these social dynamics have on the people of the countries of both regions. The main idea of the Horizon 2020 programme, and in the future also Horizon Europe, refers to the possibility that the knowledge that is built in research centres and universities can be transferred to the community. Innovation basically refers to the possibility that knowledge is materialised in practices, which shows the normal course of research linking academia with society.

Answering the question about challenges, according to Dr Adrián Bonilla, the EU-LAC International Foundation has at least three roles within the framework of its mandate to link the

societies of the countries of the bi-regional association with the decisions and policies of general character:

- 1) Disclosure of information: This not only implies making information available on a social network or website, but is a systematic and consistent policy process that implies identifying the actors, interests, vocations, co-responsibilities and complementarities.
- 2) Create networks: Link research and innovation actors and financiers, to strategic purposes and objectives, identifying complementarities to be able to generate a series of activities in this strategic guide within the framework of the relationship between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU-CELAC relationship is reciprocal because there is knowledge that is transferred from one region to another, there are resources that are exchanged in terms of knowledge. Knowledge is no longer created individually or singularly, but is increasingly social, collective and international.
- 3) Instrumentalisation of international organisations: International organisations such as the EU-LAC International Foundation can become instruments that are also part of societies and organisations of society, for example universities and research centres, in such manner that they can use the competences of international organisations to produce services according to the needs of societies and their governments.

To conclude his closing remarks, Dr Adrián Bonilla indicates that although the Horizon Europe programme has not yet been approved, it is pertinent that all interested people and organisations are prepared, know what these projects can offer and how to use that offer to give back to societies. Therefore, this first webinar has fulfilled the role that has been proposed but only represents the beginning of a series of more disseminated and systematic activities on this subject.

*The organisers of the webinar and their representatives, Dr Adrián Bonilla from the EU-LAC International Foundation and Dr Nicolás Patrici from the OBREAL-Global Observatory, thank the panellists and participants for their contributions and participation.*

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