

Bi-regional Relations



EU-LAC Foundation

II EU-LAC Webinars: The pandemic and the Latin America and the Caribbean - Europe relations

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II EU-LAC Webinars

The EU-LAC Foundation, following its mandate to foster the visibility of and promote debates on priority issues for the bi-regional agenda, organised a series of webinars to give visibility to the strategic partnership between Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, and to compare and share national and regional experiences on how to face the crisis related to COVID-19 and to discuss the challenges that it entails for bi-regional relations. The objectives of the COVID-19 webinar series were (i) to exchange different perspectives on the challenges faced by the EU and LAC regions in the face of the pandemic, (ii) to reflect on the role and actions of regional organisations and the possibilities for more active cooperation between the EU and LAC and (iii) to identify common elements of a shared action agenda of governmental and civil society organisations for the processing of the pandemic.

This is the second compilation of the series of webinars, which saw contributions from a group of experts from regional bodies, United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, EU-LAC governments, academia, think tanks, media and non-governmental institutions from the two regions.

This compilation edition is not structured according to the topics covered in each of the webinars but rather on the individual contributions of the speakers. All the information contained here was compiled from the webinars. The link to access the corresponding recording is available at the end of each webinar.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

The text of this publication was organised and synthesised from the content of the presentations by Diego Durán Cruz, Lea Reinhardt, Carolina Wolf y Federica Giordani. The panellists who contributed to the content of the webinars can be identified at the beginning of each of the reports. The EU-LAC Foundation was responsible for organising the webinars, in some cases in cooperation with other entities as part of the Foundation's mission to work with relevant actors in the framework of the strategic partnership between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Federal Foreign Office

PRESENTATION

This report presents a second written compilation of the series of webinars organised by the EU-LAC Foundation addressing the effects of COVID-19: The EU-LAC Webinars.

This report is based on the six webinars that took place between the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021. The full version of the video is available on the website of the EU-LAC Foundation. The report is structured in six different chapters, each reflecting the content of one webinar. Nonetheless, the content is not organized according to the original structure of the webinars and individual presentations, but according to umbrella topics analysed by the panellists.

In turn, these seminars were organised as part of the EU-LAC Foundation's mandate to strengthen and promote the bi-regional strategic partnership, enhancing its visibility and fostering the active participation of the respective civil societies. All this with the mission of promoting the development of a joint and dynamic global vision and a shared strategy in both regions, as well as disseminating knowledge to improve mutual understanding and the visibility of both regions and of the bi-regional partnership itself.

The EU-LAC Foundation appreciates and is grateful for the work of its interns Lea Reinhardt, Carolina Wolf and Federica Giordani. They were responsible for listening carefully to the webinars, compiling the content, drafting the final report and translating it.

Adrián Bonilla
Executive Director

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INTRODUCTION

A year and a half into the COVID-19 pandemic, its pernicious health, economic, political, and social effects continue to multiply around the world, reinforcing the gaps in these areas that existed before the pandemic and have continued to widen throughout the pandemic.

While the development, production, and distribution of vaccines against the virus worldwide have alleviated the deadly impacts of the pandemic in record time, mainly in the countries that during the first waves were the hardest hit in terms of infection and mortality rates, the subsequent social, economic, and even political crisis in a deeply interconnected world has produced an effect that is, as a whole, unprecedented. It is necessary to refer to the interconnectedness of the world because it is itself the central element of the pandemic, and yet also an instrument of its solution. Indeed, being a global problem, it cannot be solved exclusively by local or even national policies, as several cases that have opted for autarky have shown. This obliges the international community to analyse the importance of the instruments available to the multilateral system to safeguard people's lives and confront common threats.

In this logic, international cooperation continues to demonstrate its importance, whether in the development of COVID-19 vaccines and their equitable access and distribution in all regions of the world, or in recovery projects that are also consistent with the series of commitments acquired in the framework of multilateral platforms regarding environmental care with principles of sustainability, resilience and close adherence to human rights and the rights of nature, both in all their diversity.

The European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), which are two of the regions most affected by this pandemic in terms of infections, and lethality in the case of the Western Hemisphere, also suffered the associated social and economic impacts. Their societies require the development, visibility and sharing of novel policies and joint responses to address the many challenges in the health, economic and social spheres. However, for these efforts to be effective, greater coordination and strategies are needed at multilateral, regional and inter-regional levels.

The perspective of the EU-LAC Foundation, an international organisation serving the strategic partnership between the two regions, is therefore an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the countries of both regions as part of the strategy to find sustainable solutions. Based on its mandate to foster visibility and promote discussions on priority issues for the bi-regional agenda, the EU-LAC Foundation has organised since the beginning of the pandemic a series of webinars to compare and

share national and regional experiences on how to deal with the crisis and to analyse the intrinsic challenges for bi-regional relations.

The objectives of the COVID-19 webinar series are (i) to exchange different views on the challenges faced by the EU and LAC regions in the face of the pandemic; (ii) to reflect on the role and actions of regional organisations and the possibilities for more active cooperation between the EU and LAC; and (iii) to identify common elements of a shared agenda for action by governmental and civil society organisations in dealing with the pandemic.

Along these lines, the six webinars of this second edition counted on the contributions of a group of experts from regional bodies, UN agencies, EU and LAC governments, academia, and non-governmental institutions from LAC and EU regions. This report does not focus on individual contributions but is structured according to the main themes addressed in each of the webinars. All the information contained herein was compiled from the webinars. The link to access the full recording is available at the end of each webinar text.

1. EU-LAC WEBINAR: 'WHY SHOULD THE EUROPEAN UNION BE RELEVANT TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN?'

On 2 September 2020, the webinar 'Why should the European Union be relevant to Latin America and the Caribbean' took place. The webinar was co-organised by the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean International Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation) and the Regional Coordination of Economic and Social Research (CRIES) in Argentina.

The panel was represented by Adrián Bonilla, from the EU-LAC Foundation; Anna Ayuso, from the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs - CIDOB (Spain); Carlos Quenan, from the Institut des Amériques (France); Marisa Bircher, from the Argentina Global Foundation (Argentina); and Susanne Gratius, from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain). The event was moderated by Andrés Serbin and Andrei Serbin Pont from the Regional Coordination of Economic and Social Research (CRIES).

The objective of the webinar was to update and discuss the homonym EU-LAC Foundation's publication, which was launched through a project coordinated by CIDOB and the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in 2018. The webinar was organised around a series of questions related to the publication.

In his opening greeting and commentary, Andrés Serbin emphasised the opportunity to discuss and comment on the report from 2018. He furthermore highlighted its interregional nature, which has allowed three institutions from two different regions to collaborate in its preparation and underlined two points: (i) The fundamental importance of having a plurality of views on how to address the issue of the relevance of the European Union (EU) to Latin America (LA), and (ii) The relevance of the debate, given that some of the issues identified in the publication were further consolidated and deepened.

History of the bi-regional relationship between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Three strategic scenarios were mentioned, and it was explained how these scenarios could be formulated and visualised. The first is of a pessimistic nature, which translates into the decline of the Euro - Latin American and Caribbean relationship. This would occur based on an analysis of the axes of the economy, defence, development, science,

migration, and human rights. The second scenario refers to selective or “à la carte” interregionalism, with issues on which progress would be possible and others that would be subject to stagnation. The third scenario is related to the global strategic partnership, in which the bi-regional relationship would be so strong that it would be a platform to produce a strategic scenario of global impact. Consequently, any trends that might have been envisioned in recent years have been dramatically transformed by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As examples of the current context, it is worth mentioning that, in the economic scenario, the central themes of analysis focused on international trade and the capacity or not to flexibilise rules that allow for better exchange between regions. Nevertheless, the current context implies a global recession resulting in the contraction of all economies in the world, in some cases with more dramatic effects, for regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean.

Regarding security and defence, it was suggested the possibility of the creation of new autonomous regimes. However, on the contrary, while what has been observed cannot be classified as setbacks, neither can it be assumed that there has been progress in the institutionalisation of intergovernmental relations that can regulate security and defence issues, and also provide responses to eventual challenges or threats. Instead, there has been stagnation.

There has been no progress regarding development either. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) issued a report in 2019, raising a series of assumptions about the transformation of the logic of international co-operation. However, several of these assumptions, including the improvement of LA indicators, have not been fulfilled as planned and will not be achieved in the light of the current economic crisis.

In the field of science, limitations remain given the enormous heterogeneity of actors, especially in civil society, the different regulatory systems in universities, but also the dissatisfaction of various kinds.

It is difficult to choose one of these scenarios given that the pandemic significantly alters all previous assumptions. The current situation can neither be described as a scenario of decline nor would it be accurate to suggest an optimistic scenario in which the bi-regional relationship could function as a platform for a global launch. More likely, the bi-regional partnership is currently stagnating. Therefore, one of the challenges we face at present is to give continuity to the highly interesting work carried out by the three institutions in order to revisit the strategic axes and re-imagine scenarios in different circumstances.

EU and LAC mutual relevance

The role of the EU for LAC

It is possible to be optimistic about the role of the EU in this crisis, which, through its actions, has provided an example of the functionality of regionalism through the COVID structural fund, which has been allocated 750 billion euros for its member States. Some comparative advantages of the EU vis-à-vis other global actors, especially in the light of the pandemic and its effects, include, among others, the fact that the EU is a normative actor with shared values and relatively well functioning public health systems. The EU is not a unitary actor, but a multilevel one, for example in its structure and governance, as it has a parliament and different specialised institutions and 27 Member States. Furthermore, there is also a need to recover through the crisis its soft power, that is, its influence in other regions and in particular on how the EU is perceived and the resulting implications for the bi-regional relationship.

Regarding the latter, Latin American and Caribbean regionalism could be strengthened by interregionalism with the European Union, for instance in the relations between the EU and MERCOSUR. In this context, the United States and China are nation-states and therefore more focused on “national interests”. Accordingly, both the US and China have a less horizontal foreign policy and are not consensus-seeking actors, nor do they tend to base their actions on values. Therefore, having the EU as an ally translates into a commitment to social cohesion, regionalism, and global governance. Likewise, the institution’s commitment to climate change and human security is of utmost importance.

The EU as an intermediary for LAC to the depolarisation of bi-regional relations

At the end of the last decade, if one asked whether the bi-regional relationship was in decline or on the rise, there was no easy answer. Today, years later, elements of decline have appeared, although this does not necessarily mean that the relationship is in complete regression. However, in particular, the suspension of the EU- CELAC summits linked to the Venezuelan crisis and also a series of turbulences in the European Union between 2017 and 2018 add to the factors that have affected the situation.

Currently these elements that generate the declines must be re-analysed in the light of the pandemic. At the same time, the effects of the Trump administration, which have contributed to a more virulent Sino-American rivalry have to be examined. China is not exempt from that either. There are movements, for example in the Caribbean, with the development of diplomatic relations with several countries in the region (El Salvador, Panama, Dominican Republic) that have led to a greater hardening of the US concerning this rivalry.

For the European Union, a more autonomous position in the face of this rivalry could be a point of support and interest in the LAC region. The EU can play a role as the main promoter of cooperation by having another interlocutor for several elements on issues of regional governance.

However, the only realistic scenario is that of regionalism à la carte. What are the issues and countries that are somehow relevant with potential to limit Sino-US rivalry? The EU needs to identify which countries have the potential to become a global Latin American interlocutor despite the division of the region, which may be more prone to a kind of “de-bilateralisation” of Latin American relations with China and the US.

The same question must be asked in LAC: what are the different interlocutors in the European Union from LAC? Who are the actors? In this sense, it is difficult for the European Union to play this “de-bilateralisation” role fully because of the Latin American divide. There is not necessarily a consensus at all levels in the EU and also because the EU plays a role in asserting its status as a soft power, which is a different approach than the way the US and China relate to the region.

The role of LAC for the EU

On the other hand, when assessing the advantage of LAC for the EU, it is possible to point out several issues in which the two regions are strategically relevant to each other. Prior to any analysis, the current world order has to be taken into account, keeping in mind that there are two centres of power emerging in the world. The first being in the North Atlantic, built after the Second World War, and the second, located in the Pacific, which is of similar economic and political importance to the Central Atlantic. In addition, there are trends towards autarchy, whose probably most prominent example is Washington’s foreign policy, which over the past three and a half years has been characterised by its heterodoxy with respect to itself and its history.

A liberal international order - understanding liberalism in both the political and free trade order - does not reflect today’s reality, as the international order is capitalist yet not necessarily liberal. While there are new emerging actors, several actors that were emerging in the past decade have now come to a standstill. Perhaps the most important example is that of the BRICS, understood as a community, whose emergence has not been as rapid as was assumed ten years ago. Undoubtedly, China is a central actor in the contemporary world, as is Russia (in a different dimension), yet those countries considered to be the new centres, or potential ones such as Turkey or Iran, did not actually follow suit.

Looking at the bi-regional relationship, the EU remains the main investor in LAC, and therefore an important trading partner. In the case of several Southern Cone countries, the EU is one of the most important. It is also worth noting that the Latin American states were historically built in the image and resemblance of Europe. Therefore, for the

third scenario to occur, namely that of a global balance and a remarkable community of visions, the European Union is very relevant for LAC. However, as LAC is also extraordinarily important for the EU:

“Looking at the long term, I would say that there is no better strategic partner for the EU - and this includes the economy, politics and culture - than Latin America and the Caribbean. There is undoubtedly a mutual relevance at the strategic level. Now, this is the opportunity that the regions have, and that is why, from the point of view of duty, we must prevent it from being eroded” Adrián Bonilla.

The central themes of Latin American and Caribbean regionalism in its relationship with the EU

First of all, on the global stage, there is the possibility of building a sphere of balance that prevents Latin America - and other parts of the world - from becoming a terrain of competition between Washington and Beijing when the actors of LAC-EU convergence are equally or even more relevant in terms of GDP, population and cultural capacity compared globally.

A second dimension is related to how to build relations that allow for more fair logics in global trade in the face of all the existing presences in LAC. Thus, the possibility of reactivating the increase in Euro-Latin American and Caribbean trade is politically important for both regions. This is also relevant in the light of the latest trends and to neutralise, moderate, contain and balance a return of Washington's policies towards the region. One example is the discussion about the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Based on data from ECLAC and other multilateral economic organisations, there are two elements to consider: The economic recession will probably cause a decline in access to basic services for a significant part of the population. As a consequence, inequalities will be reborn and new data on poverty and extreme poverty will be available. This affects the conventional logic of cooperation towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the logic of traditional European conventional politics, the horizons of social cohesion as an element of balance and support for democracy, as well as the idea of stabilising governance, are affected. The LAC region will be characterised by a lack of economic resources.

What could be the role of CELAC?

It is very likely that the institutions that were created in the second half of the 20th century need to be updated. This also applies to the EU-LAC bi-regional relationship: there is no better LAC dialogue than CELAC, as the other organisations are subregional and most of them are focused on trade. In political terms, CELAC is the space for

dialogue. It has gone through and managed to survive the multiple tensions that persist in the region, arising from the various moments of political or economic crisis in different countries.

CELAC continues to be the most important interlocutor in the region, the space where all the countries of the region can be represented beyond the logics of development and ideologies of their governments. In addition, on the global agenda of LAC, there are the issues of multilateral relations, the SDG's, how they will be measured and achieved given the current conditions, among other elements.

However, CELAC is not an institution, but a platform of summits with some intergovernmental entities. An institutional approach is a necessity, without which there is no continuity.

Measures to contribute to the reform of multilateralism

The COVID pandemic has come at a critical time for multilateralism that already existed previously. As such, we have had to rethink and address the urgency of acting on this systemic crisis of multilateralism.

Two parallel crises (in addition to the financial one) have to be addressed: the crisis of institutional efficiency and the crisis of legitimacy, as the multilateral system does not represent the current order. The example of the US claiming China's control over the World Health Organisation (WHO) reflects the fact that it is impossible to exert influence or dominance over this organisation, implying a struggle for control over the institutions.

It is only possible to resolve such crises by opening institutions up to more transparent decision-making mechanisms, and to a search for alliances that will allow progress on certain issues. Multilateralism must therefore transcend the Westphalian era and be adapted to a much more pluralistic world regarding its actors. In this sense, the EU plays a role as a multilevel actor and its potential must be applied to the relationship with LAC:

"This is a strength; the two regions can contribute to an interregionalism that strengthens multilateralism from a more pluralistic perspective. In this respect, we need to see where we can create alliances, analyse very carefully the points where we have contradictions and which we will have to resolve, and see what alliances can be made to avoid being overwhelmed by these two poles and to achieve room for manoeuvre in such a complex world" Anna Ayuso

Moreover, multilateralism is a more valid instrument than ever to deal with global problems. The possibility of having solutions or answers to global problems does not involve autarchy, nor does it involve bilateralism. Thus, multilateralism remains as an instrument, and if it has been rationalised, it is still the only one available.

The pandemic and the EU-LAC relation

The effect of the COVID19 pandemic on EU-LAC relations

The pandemic has meant a certain revival in bi-regional relations. However, the news and involvement in LAC are not encouraging. With reference to the publication of Jerónimo Ríos, which argues that “the non-existent regional response to COVID19 in Latin America”, demonstrates the lack of coordination between countries while the EU was able to provide a response despite not having the competence in health matters. The latter, however, is one of the EU’s major shortcomings as it lacks a common social policy.

An important element to consider is the specific developments in each region and the risk of deepening asymmetries, among other things, concerning the capacity to emerge from the crisis, stimulate the economy and enter a phase of revival and reactivation of the economy in each region and at the global level. The EU possesses a variety of mechanisms to boost the economy, while LAC does not have resources, posing a key problem.

We are faced with various issues that need to be addressed in depth, in particular the rejection of multilateralism from various angles and a regional situation that does not contribute due to the divisions that were mentioned. Academic discussion can be helpful for political decision-making and we must continue along this path.

The LAC initiatives to overcome this crisis and strengthen its link with the EU

Currently, there is no regional political agenda for dialogue to overcome the complex situation posed by the pandemic, as the countries are more concerned with their internal affairs. However, there is an urgent need for a regional dialogue from a trade perspective, since LAC is the main supplier of food in the world, for which the EU is a relevant partner.

Given the current economic and health crisis, there is a discussion about changing the norms and the global health framework. This is a major challenge that the region will have to face together. The EU is already indicating what will characterise European consumption in the coming times and LAC is anticipating this information eagerly. However, first of all it is important to establish a regional dialogue to reveal how food is produced and how natural resources can be protected, taking into account population growth, particularly that of the middle class.

Currently, Mercosur has advanced the corresponding steps with the EU to reach an agreement under the current Uruguayan presidency, which coincides with the German presidency of the EU Council. Mercosur, however, still needs to express a position on the issue of climate change, as requested by the EU. Also internally, this agenda contains certain dichotomies within the market, due to political differences within the

bloc. Dialogue is certainly important, however today it might not be the most effective or smoothest.

Each of the Latin American governments is handling the crisis in different ways, with different priorities. Chile, for example, has approached the Asia-Pacific region, with New Zealand and Singapore through a digital economy agreement. Some of the countries in the region see an opportunity in interregional cooperation, through instruments such as digitalisation, while others are more attentive to domestic issues.

“The opportunity is on the table, we have to work from the region, at least for what is left in 2020 a regional dialogue beyond political ideologies and a strong commitment would be very important” Marisa Bircher.

The EU-LAC relationship in favour of sustainability

The impact of COVID19 on the SDGs and the Agenda 2030

The issue of cooperation is one of the most powerful sectors in bi- regional relations. Clearly, there have been political differences and economically the EU has distanced itself, reducing its weight in LAC. However, as a relevant actor in the field of cooperation, the EU continues to be an important if not the only player, as China’s type of cooperation is different. Concerning Agenda 2030, as the framework on which this cooperation agenda is now being built, the pandemic has highlighted the weaknesses and also the traps of the middle- income countries, particularly concerning the impossibility of promoting technological transformation for a region with greater added value. Agenda 2030 is aligned with the priorities of middle-income countries, with a multi-sectoral agenda that incorporates various elements, unlike the Millennium Development Goals. However, the pandemic forces us to return to the essence: to start from a very broad agenda until the core issues are identified.

There are three basic pillars. The first is the fight against inequality, an endemic problem in LAC, but also in the EU inequality is growing. People with fewer resources are the most affected, in Madrid, for example, half of those newly infected are immigrants. Therefore, the EU must rethink its social structures, not only through assistance policies, but also via structural policies that address the structural causes. The second pillar is the digital transformation, posing questions about how to close the gap, not only between citizens, but also between countries. The third priority is environmental sustainability, which implies changes in the energy mix, in technology, in infrastructure, but especially a cultural change in how we relate to the planet. What is required is a change in mentality.

These are some of the axes that should be part of the framework of the Agenda and have a series of derivations in different policies and how these policies are financed, involving in turn fundamental issues of the fiscal and social pact.

The prospects for cooperation in the fight against climate change and in the health sector

Health issues seem to be a starting point for the consideration of relaunching the bi-regional relationship. These issues are important but have not yet been explored in depth.

First, health policy had never been a community policy in the EU and, secondly, the reports on health available and those from the Institut des Amériques - concerning France and Latin America and the Caribbean - were always secondary. Indeed, few countries in the EU have major health or medical-pharmaceutical cooperation agreements with LAC. This is therefore a fundamental clue for further agreements and dialogue, which was even mentioned during the July 10 Declaration resulting from the Ministerial Meeting between the two regions.

The problem of implementing these issues on a global scale stands out. During the meeting itself, the great difficulties of interregionalism, especially in LAC, were emphasised. As an example, there is no mention of CELAC in the declaration. Mexico proposed an EU-CELAC Summit, to which Brazil did not express its approval. In this respect, the countries face a problem of interlocution.

“Health is a point on which we should concentrate our attention and action because it connects directly with the urgency and the need, both in Europe and in Latin America, and because it is an issue that should have been multilateral and global. There was no global coordination, so an EU-LAC relationship is a positive contribution to that” Carlos Quenan.

The EU-Mercosur Agreement in the history of the bi-regional relation

The agreement is of great importance due to its regional and global scope, considering that the two regions account for over 750 million inhabitants/consumers and almost 24% of the world's GDP between the two blocs.

Although the process of negotiating the agreement took more than twenty years, the two blocks eventually came to a consensus. However, it should be kept in mind that ratification is still pending in the respective congresses and parliaments. One area that is currently being monitored and discussed in both regions, mainly in the European Union, is environmental and also agricultural concerns. The effects will be felt directly in the members of Mercosur and also indirectly in the other countries of the region. In the current global situation, the underlying message of the agreement - a multilateral trade and cooperation system and political relations - is transcendental.

Likewise, it is impossible to predict what may happen in the coming years, yet it can be anticipated that bi-regional relations will be restructured. This being the case, the

agreement has the potential to strengthen the export indicators of Mercosur countries, while also revealing the importance of the region.

It is the voice, the decision and the conviction of the four partners that is very relevant and that is what led to finalising the agreement with the EU. The Uruguayan presidency was very focused and has a clear vision of Mercosur's economic integration with the world.

Furthermore, transparency is needed regarding the EU-Mercosur agreement and its environmental clauses, possibly allowing for the participation of civil society organisations. These clauses allow bringing the regulatory standards closer to other international actors.

In an analysis verifying the status quo of the bi-regional relationship, it can be noted that, despite the economic crisis, fragmentation and polarisation, there has also been greater interest in this relationship. Now that the regions have more presence in the respective agendas, a more positive future is expected for the bi-regional relationship.

Reflecting on the impact of Jair Bolsonaro and his government on the EU-Mercosur negotiation, should be noted that Bolsonaro has indeed already contributed to the polarisation that has occurred in the region. Brazil has gone from being a country that in recent years had served as an arbiter trying to seek consensus in the region and stimulate the integration of South America and CELAC, to contributing to generating more tension. Furthermore, there is a negative impact on the environment, which is the main factor that is generating controversy over the EU-Mercosur agreement. However, Brazil did not leave CELAC but protested and suspended its participation.

Regarding the impact of the Brexit on interregional relations, it is possible to emphasize that the Brexit is not an imminent issue, although it does affect the Caribbean countries more, some of them having close relations with the United Kingdom. The good news, in her view, is that no EU Member State has followed suit. In this respect, on the other side of the Atlantic, the possibility of Brazil's withdrawal from CELAC is viewed with concern, as it is a key player and could create a problem of representation.

A resolution on Brexit and an agreement with the European Union is very important for Mercosur as it is relevant to know the results of the agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom in order to later take up certain areas impacted by the Mercosur-EU agreement.

Likewise, the political impact of Brexit has already been relatively amortised. The economic impact, however, is more complicated to measure since the exit is happening gradually and will be blurred by the pandemic.

Final Reflections

“This is an opportunity for the countries to take an interest in promoting an agenda that can try to avoid political confrontation and make progress on those issues where we can gain by working together” Anna Ayuso.

First, the focus on interregionalism goes beyond the specific issues of the common agenda, which must also be addressed, and alternatives must be sought so that these two large blocs - LAC and the EU - somehow, with internal difficulties and under the pressure of external difficulties, can advance or not towards a more efficient, developed and advanced relationship. Second, the pandemic indicates the importance of re-evaluating the scenarios that have been addressed, not only in the economic sphere, but also on the political and geopolitical front. Finally, the mutual strategic relevance between LAC and the EU, particularly in light of a potential bipolarity between the US and China.

“There is room for other forms of articulation of a new world order, in which other actors - such as the EU and LAC - have their say, as long as they know how to play their cards properly” Andrés Serbin.

The poster is for a webinar titled "¿POR QUÉ LA UNIÓN EUROPEA DEBERÍA SER DE RELEVANCIA PARA AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE?". It is scheduled for Wednesday, September 2, 2020, via Zoom. The event is organized by CRIES and the EU-LAC Foundation. The poster lists the following details:

- Date and Time:** MIÉRCOLES 02 DE SEPTIEMBRE 2020, 09:00 (CEST).
- Panelists:**
 - Marisa Bircher (Fundación Argentina Global (Argentina))
 - Carlos Quenan (Institut des Ameriques (Francia))
 - Adrián Bonilla (Fundación EU-LAC)
 - Susanne Gratius (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. (España))
 - Anna Ayuso (CIDOB (España))
- Moderator:** Andrei Serbin Pont (CRIES (Argentina))
- Registration:** INSCRIPCIÓN <https://forms.gle/RbMVjUoRVaCKxKZ86>

For the recording of the webinar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkLXPvO2ieY>

2. EU-LAC WEBINAR:

'CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS TO PROMOTE VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN THE EU AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN A POST-COVID-19 CONTEXT'

The webinar 'Challenges and innovations to promote voluntary service in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean in a post-COVID-19 context' took place on September 14, 2020. The webinar was organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Technical Ministry for Economic and Social Development Planning from Paraguay.

The event began with the institutional greetings from Santiago Rojas, Director of International Relations and External Cooperation and Interim Secretary General of the National Ministry for Youth (SNJ) from the Government of Paraguay, and from Adrian Bonilla, Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation.

The following panel included Daysi Hume, President of the National Voluntary Service Council (CONAVO) from Paraguay; Rocío Vergara Chalhoub, National Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteer Program (UNV) in Ecuador; Stefany Paez, Coordinator of France Volontaires in Ecuador; Rolando Kandel, Deputy Director of the Fundación SES and Vice President for America of the Coordination Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIIVS); and Sofía Mejía, Manager for Voluntary Programmes and Global Campaign of Habitat for Humanity International, Latin America and the Caribbean Office. The webinar was moderated by Eunice Rivas, representative of the Technical Ministry of Planning of Paraguay.

International volunteering

Besides the particular goals of each project of the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service Organizations (CCIIVS), the aim is for volunteers to live together with counterparts from other countries and with local volunteers in order to promote cultural exchange and learning. Volunteers are encouraged to interact with one another and share their perspectives, traditions and cultures, using the daily tasks and common goals of the project as the basis for dialogue. By collaborating on a common project, the goal is to have opportunities to work for a common purpose using their own capabilities and learn through practical experience.

In addition to coordinating the projects, the CCIVS seeks to increase the visibility of voluntary services. In cooperation with various organisations, are organised communication campaigns and studies on the impact of voluntary service. Through the various voluntary activities, young people develop a higher self-confidence and strengthen their interpersonal and social skills; they learn collectively and through their own actions that it is possible to create change that has an impact on their surroundings, as can be seen in the following testimonies.

“For me, voluntary service is an opportunity to meet one another, to share and learn together, to empathize and be solidary. It is also an opportunity to be a part of change, to be and spread hope. Volunteering helped me to realize and appreciate my value and my abilities. It gave me the chance to challenge myself, it brought me friends, many lessons, skills and languages, and allowed me to encounter new realities and thanks to that, to see things differently, with a new look and being more tolerant” (Agustina, volunteer in Italy)

“I believe that the main part of a voluntary service is its work for the common good, through which it can transmit the sense of cooperation and encourage acting from a social responsibility standpoint without imposition. That makes it so that every contribution is unique. Personally, being a volunteer showed me the grace of helping others; being willing to give a hand is fine, but doing so by working together with others and getting to know them, reconnects with the most human parts, and gives sense to everything.” (Melina, volunteer in Iceland)

Volunteering for Sustainable Development (SDGs)

The current scenario poses enormous challenges that emphasize the need to rethink volunteerism as a fundamental tool for sustainable development and the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030. Recognising this, in the last year the United Nations have approved a series of resolutions on volunteerism which, being approved by the member states, strengthen the impulse of voluntary activities for sustainable development in the international agenda. In 2012 the resolution for integrating voluntary service into the next decade was approved and the States requested the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV) to develop an action plan to integrate volunteerism into the efforts for peace and development.

The action plan ‘Integrating volunteerism in peace and development: Action plan for the next decade and after’ was approved in 2015, at the same time as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. It seeks to foster volunteerism as an accelerator for development, particularly during the so-called “decade of action”. To facilitate this objective, in 2018 the resolution ‘Volunteerism in pro of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development’ was approved, encouraging member states to improve cooperation with interested parties to collect data on the impact of voluntary service for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This need to have more and better data on the scope, contribution and impact of voluntary activities led to the organisation of the Global Technical Summit on Volunteerism “Reimagining Volunteerism for the Agenda 2030”, which took place on July 2020 within the framework of the High Level Political Forum of the United Nations, in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Half Moon. As preparation for this summit, there was a “Call for Action” process, through which it was sought to gather as much evidence as possible on the contributions of volunteerism for sustainable development. This process was led by the member states, with the collaboration of civil society organisations, the private sector and academia, who collected and reported evidence on the contributions of volunteerism for the SDGs in their countries.

At the same time, UNV organised various regional surveys to gather evidence; in Latin America, the survey was carried out in Chile in 2019, in the framework of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It also organised online surveys and virtual fora to ensure the participation of a broad spectrum of citizens. The collected information was gathered on a database published on the website <http://knowledge.unv.org/>. This knowledge management site, unique in the world, collects pertinent information on regional, national and global voluntary service. The webpage includes three sections. The first is a database of the official information provided by member states on their Annual Voluntary Reports, including the various components of voluntary service, legislation or existing public policies, as well as the national statistics on volunteerism. The second section is an evidence section, and includes exclusively academic and scientific research conducted on the impact of volunteerism for development, aiming to improve accessibility of the evidence produced, especially in the global South. Finally, the third section, which is still under construction, is focused on the practice community, and will allow to share documents on voluntary service by different actors, and will include any report or study on the subject without a need for an academic background.

Furthermore, the preparatory process for the Global Technical Summit on Volunteerism included the elaboration of a Global Summary Report and a series of regional Summary Reports on how volunteerism can be reimagined for the Agenda 2030. There are two conclusions to be highlighted: in the first place, voluntary service is still not strongly rooted in the efforts to promote the Agenda 2030; and secondly, there are still significant gaps in the measurement of volunteer work and in the data and evidence generated, particularly among the countries of the Global South.

As for the particular situation of the LAC region, the “Summary Report. Action Plan for the Integration of Volunteerism in the Agenda 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean” recognised the need to increase the measuring of voluntary activities’ contributions, as well as improving the use of technology to strengthen voluntary service in the region. Other actions identified as important are the generation and impulse of policies and legislation, and the promotions and strengthening of alliances. The main areas where voluntary service has an impact as an accelerator for SDGs are inequality and

inclusion, migration, unemployment, youth, violence, and environmental degradation and climate change.

Based on this information, the Technical Summit took place virtually between July 13-16, 2020, with over 5.000 participants. Conceived as part of the Action Plan framework, this summit summarised the conclusions reached in a Declaration. Among the main conclusions, the participants identified the gradual advances in appropriation, integration and measuring of volunteer work, and established the commitments to guarantee an increased involvement of the people in the development programmes; in addition, they recognised the diverse forms of contribution of different types of volunteer activities, and the need to develop, try and use new instruments and approaches to measure and understand the scale, scope and contributions of volunteerism.

In this perspective, the vision of volunteerism in 2030 was conceived as a unique resource that allows to transform and accelerate the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. During the next ten years, on the so-called “Decade of Action”, collective efforts must be focused on mobilising people globally, demand urgency and ambition, and promote solutions through ideas. To achieve this, the actors committed to seven specific actions, including:

1. Broadening the access to voluntary service and its opportunities in all SDGs.
2. Firmly supporting volunteerism, beyond formal opportunities and through the organisations.
3. Attending the inequalities and risks of voluntary work.
4. Strengthening the structures that permit the involvement of people in development processes through voluntary services.
5. Generating new models of voluntary action to promote solutions through ideas.
6. Measuring the impact of actions taken to consider the welfare of volunteers and the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030.
7. Adapting the efforts of volunteers to address gaps and challenges in the pursuit of the SDGs.

The opportunities generated from volunteerism to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in a post-pandemic age

Currently there are many opportunities to participate and engage in voluntary service, and a great need and willingness to be involved. Where there is opportunity to improve people’s life quality, there is an opportunity to strengthen volunteerism, and today’s context presents a scenario with multiple possibilities.

It is important to highlight that the response to the socio-economic crisis in a post-pandemic age must be guided fundamentally by the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Volunteerism is a unique resource to transform and accelerate this agenda, and to

place in the center of all efforts the promise of “not leaving anyone behind”, since there is an extremely high risk of excluding and leaving behind millions of persons in this particular context, which is why there needs to be special emphasis on reducing inequalities; inequalities which are at the core of most problems in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is here where voluntary service can play a strategic role to ensure the integration and inclusion of all persons who need to be included in the responses.

The volunteers’ commitment, enthusiasm and capacity to respond immediately are fundamental to support the recovery processes, and allow for the possibility of amplifying the actions and policies through volunteer networks; they are key actors in the acceleration of the SDGs and of the effectiveness of actions in remote communities, where official responses take longer in being implemented.

The United Nations has developed a response plan to the world, where the need to prioritise people’s health and protection is highlighted, while ensuring the social protection and basic services, promoting an adequate economic response for recovery - which includes actions that protect employment, informal workers, and SMEs -, as well as efforts to foster social cohesion and resilience. These working lines are ideal to incorporate volunteers, who have the capacity to contribute in these activities, amplifying the scale of interventions, maximizing the impact, integrating more people, and ensuring no one is left behind.

Experiences of Paraguay

The National Youth Secretariat has the task of working with and for young people, who represent 27.79% of the population, in various fields, promoting the participation of young people in the political, social, economic and cultural development of the country.

From a social point of view and under the regulatory framework of Law 6,060/2018 which regulates volunteering, the Secretariat seeks to encourage young beneficiaries of the Youth Scholarship Programme to carry out social return activities, which address the particular needs of their communities. Among the projects to be carried out are plastic collection campaigns, cleaning of watercourses, and reforestation campaigns with native plants.

One area of particular focus is young people who have specialized abroad. Within the programme, we seek to encourage these beneficiaries to have the opportunity to share their knowledge; either through the Revista Científica de la Juventud, or through small lectures and training workshops, which are currently being held virtually in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The health crisis emphasizes the need to provide more opportunities and tools to young people, as well as to create the necessary stimuli to empower them to share their experiences, skills, knowledge and services with the community.

Institutions for volunteering

The cases of Paraguay and France

The National Volunteer Council (CONAVO) of Paraguay is the institution under the Technical Secretariat for Economic and Social Development Planning responsible for promoting national volunteer policy. Created in 2018 with the approval of Law 6,060/2018 which regulates voluntary citizen participation, the CONAVO is responsible for establishing the necessary mechanisms to facilitate the registration of volunteer organisations in the National Register of Volunteers. Likewise, it ensures that the different actors involved in volunteer programmes are aware of the law and improve the conditions of volunteers. The CONAVO is eligible to receive financial and technical support from international technical cooperation agencies, as well as funding for programmes from State bodies.

In its organisation, CONAVO is a public institution of mixed composition. It has fourteen councillors, who represent various institutions and sectors of society. Among them are five representatives of the executive branch, while the rest represent public and private universities and civil society organisations.

The institution has eight objectives:

1. To support the organisation and expansion of volunteer service
2. To promote the inclusion of volunteering in development plans
3. To coordinate volunteering schemes through appropriate communication policies between regional organisations
4. To define policies for the promotion, support, cooperation, coordination and articulation between volunteer organisations
5. To improve the quality of voluntary services, thus avoiding the exploitation of volunteers and generating humane working conditions
6. To propose and recommend incentive policies for volunteering
7. To propose and recommend legislative reforms concerning volunteering, adapting the legislation to current times
8. Coordinate with the various civil society organisations, as well as public and private institutions to promote their participation in the development of the volunteer service.

For its part, France Volontaires is a French association created ten years ago with the mission of promoting the exchange and international solidarity through volunteering, from France to the world. Since then, this mission has evolved at par with voluntary service itself, allowing for the organisation to mobilise French volunteers internationally since 2012, and establishing reciprocal voluntary service programmes since 2015. These programmes provide opportunities for foreign volunteers to be mobilised to France and participate in development projects related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). France Volontaires seeks to increase the mobility of voluntary services, with the objective of building a concept of universal volunteerism, in order to strengthen

the cooperation between States, the promotion of solidarity and exchanges, and the construction of a global citizenship.

Furthermore, it aims to create solid voluntary service ecosystems at a national and international level; that is, volunteer networks developed in each country in different areas, with legal frameworks, a solid institutionalality, with financing, strong associative networks and training programmes that support volunteers before, during and after their experience. This would allow to develop quality missions for the volunteers, considering the contributions of national actors and the potential that exists in complementing national and international volunteerism.

International

Habitat for Humanity is a global, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, working in more than 70 countries worldwide. Since its establishment in 1976, Habitat has worked with more than 29 million people around the world to facilitate the construction or improvement of their homes. The institution seeks to empower families through housing, using a variety of projects as a tool, including the construction of low-cost housing, influencing public policy for decent housing, influencing the housing market and financial systems, and supporting preparedness and response to disasters.

Habitat is a global institution, based in Atlanta, Georgia. It has several area offices for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in Costa Rica, for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in Slovakia, and for Asia-Pacific (AP) in the Philippines. In the LAC region, Habitat has 13 national organisations and specific projects or partnerships in four countries - Dominica, Ecuador, Panama and Costa Rica. In 2019, Habitat supported 2 million people, mobilising 2 million volunteers each year to support the projects globally. In LAC, these volunteers contributed approximately US\$5 million to the local economies of the countries they worked in.

Voluntary service is a broad field, within which exist several types of service. Created in 1948 under the auspice of UNESCO, the Coordination Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) focuses on promoting international voluntary service. This type of voluntary service arose 100 years ago, with the end of the First World War; in 1920, groups of volunteers from Germany and France built reconstruction camps in areas damaged by the conflict, which served also as a form of reconciliation. Since then, the international voluntary service acquired a meaning as a tool for peace-building promotion.

The CCIVS is a network that encompasses 188 social organisations in over 90 countries, working on areas of sustainable development and human rights; annually, they mobilise over 30.000 volunteers from around the world. The core principle of the organisation is the bringing together of diversities; the CCIVS considers that it is fundamental to

respect and value the differences, as a fundamental source of learning, both for the volunteers and for the communities.

The CCIVS facilitates opportunities for young volunteers to travel to distant countries or regions to provide a service for the community. With the collaboration of local organisations, it aims to encourage young people to carry out significant actions respectful of local dynamics for a determined period of time. There are short term voluntary service camps, through which volunteers can work two weeks intensively on specific projects. Additionally, there are medium and long term projects, linked to broad community projects that can last up until one year. The activities of volunteers are varied, and can include educational, cultural, heritage restoration or housing projects; as well as thematic projects, covering topics such as integration, gender inequality reduction, anti-violence or refugee support.

Bi-regional measures for youth and volunteering

The EU-LAC Foundation works with a variety of social issues, among which the youth has been one of the most important. In 2015, the First Youth Day was organised in Quito, a meeting of young people to discuss the matter of youth employment. The Second Youth Day took place in 2019, focusing on the promotion of volunteering; a subject the Foundation is committed to continue working on in the future. Unfortunately, given the situation regarding COVID-19, it has been necessary to postpone the Third Conference in Asunción until 2021; the Foundation will then be able to once again provide a space that brings together the greatest number of people interested in volunteering to continue working on this subject.

The webinar “Challenges and innovations to promote voluntary service in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean in a post-COVID19 context” answers the question: How to sustain this initiative to support the needs of societies in the era of COVID-19? Humanity is at a very difficult moment, and the coming years are going to present a series of challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean and for the European Union, including the global recession and diminishing resources. It is necessary to consider all these possibilities, to agree, plan and advance with public health policies in order to achieve the Social Development Objectives set for 2030: objectives of balance, social cohesion, greater equality, poverty reduction and more equality in all our countries. For this reason, and understanding it as a subject of systematic and organized work, volunteering is a very important tool, an instrument of the people and of governments, and a link between the needs of societies and the capacities and realities of states.

Challenges and opportunities of volunteering

In addition to the current challenges derived from the pandemic, the international voluntary service faces two constant challenges. In the first place, there is a need

to increase the visibility of voluntary services in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly encouraging the exchange of volunteers between countries of the same region. The second challenge is the continuous need to develop public policies, both to foster voluntary service and to guarantee the protection of volunteers; it is important that projects are suited to existing public policies in each country. Yet, in this challenging context, the aim is that the voluntary service is seen as an opportunity to create a new citizenship, where the individual is a collective citizen, with empathy and critical thinking, and conscious of their social and natural environment.

Latin America and the Caribbean

One of the main challenges is to establish CONAVO as an institution with a leading role in volunteering and with the capacity to articulate the volunteering programmes that exist both in state institutions and in civil society organisations. It is particularly important to make it clear that volunteer work is not synonymous with charity, but rather that it is a tool for societal transformation that can serve to raise public awareness about different issues such as climate change, education and inequality.

Furthermore, CONAVO has identified three main challenges for the promotion and development of volunteerism. Firstly, it is necessary to work so that volunteering is perceived as a tool for building citizen awareness that contributes to national development, and not just as an activity carried out by citizens individually. The second challenge is to build social capital that promotes a supportive, free and equal society, using volunteering as a tool for generating empathy and reducing inequality in society. Finally, the third challenge is to ensure that volunteering is encouraged in society through state and civil society mechanisms.

Impacts of the pandemic on the volunteers

The health crisis emphasizes the need to provide more opportunities and tools to young people, as well as to create the necessary stimuli to empower them to share their experiences, skills, knowledge and services with the community.

The pandemic brought about new challenges, for example, for Habitat, exposing the social inequalities in the region even more dramatically. Before COVID-19, 84% of the population lived in cities, of which 21% - almost 100 million people - lived in poverty, inadequate housing or settlements with little access to drinking water or sanitation. When considering the urban and rural population, the percentage of people living below the poverty line rose to 30%. Additionally, 53% of the population worked in the informal sector.

The consequences of the pandemic have exacerbated the situation. Since the beginning of the crisis, millions of people have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19, increasing

the percentage of the population living in poverty. In response, Habitat has developed the “Housing, Communities + Hope” campaign. To address the situation, this campaign focuses on improving access to water and housing, which are necessary for isolation and the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19. As such, Habitat is committed to working with communities to contain the transmission of COVID-19, and particularly to ensure that people affected by the economic crisis as a result of the pandemic are not forced to leave their homes and expose themselves to the risk of infection.

For this purpose, the campaign has three main lines of work, seeking to provide a dual response to the crisis. Firstly, actions to address the health crisis, considering that housing is the first line of defence against the transmission of COVID-19. Secondly, measures to counteract the economic crisis, supporting the economic recovery of the housing market in favour of the most vulnerable population, and the use of the leverage of housing as an economic engine for recovery. Thirdly, advocacy and measures to support communities to demand accountability from national, regional and local governments.

The pandemic has also affected how Habitat relates to volunteers and communities. Due to their face-to-face nature and high levels of contact, volunteer programmes worldwide had to be paused.

The current situation has created marked difficulties for international voluntary services. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the ongoing problems in the communities due to inequalities, the increase of violence and the consequences of climate change; in addition to these problems, the communities now have to face food challenges caused by a reduction in incomes, as well as the sanitary issues. Nonetheless, the crisis has not suspended voluntary activities; on the contrary, they have increased due to the rising need, though in different formats, suited to the circumstances.

The current juncture has emphasized the need to strengthen public policies to ensure the access to connectivity. Given the transition towards digital activities, it is increasingly important to guarantee connectivity, access to equipment and to a stable internet connection. Access to the internet is fundamental, since it allows access to other rights. For instance, within the educational sphere, education systems have been forced to interrupt physical teaching formats, but they continue to offer classes virtually. However, it is necessary for students to have an adequate internet connection for them to be able to participate in their classes.

In addition to these lines of action identified for Latin America and the Caribbean, the specific challenges that have arisen due to the pandemic have highlighted the need for additional commitments. In response to the need for information, between 4 May and 11 June 2020, the UN Interagency Youth Group conducted a survey on “Young People and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean”. This was answered by 7751 young persons between 15 and 29 years old in 39 countries of the region, seeking to collect evidence about young adults and teenagers in the context of the pandemic. Among

the results obtained, a significant finding that is worth mentioning shows that 4 out of 10 young persons in the region have participated or led an action in response to COVID-19. The more common actions include online voluntary actions and donations to support the efforts of civil society organisations.

There is great potential in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and a strong capacity for immediate and massive action in moments of crisis; the young people show a need to organise and participate in the solutions to problems that our countries are facing. In this juncture, volunteerism must be recognised as an important accelerator for development, and as such, be strengthened to address the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, while also considering the medium- and long-term commitments to fulfil the Agenda 2030.

Lessons from the pandemic as regards the future of volunteering

On the road to sustainable development, it is essential to maintain the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as guidelines. However, the current context has complicated the situation and shown that there is a need to rethink the lines of action. The pandemic has caused great uncertainty, requiring us to learn how to work, react and change, and to create a permanent dynamism in line with changes in this context.

These lessons have been both of form and of substance. One of the lessons in terms of form is the idea of dynamism. The constant need to adapt due to unexpected changes and uncertainty has generated a surge in creativity of new solutions; if it is not possible for people to meet personally, it is necessary to generate ways to work together though at a distance, with the tools that are available. In particular, combinations of face-to-face and virtual activities will continue to be used and further developed. This will allow a greater number of meetings, not only physical but also virtual, increasing the opportunities for dialogue from different countries.

The fundamental lessons concern solidarity and the collective. As rarely in history, the pandemic and the corresponding care policies were experienced simultaneously in different countries; people were isolated in their homes, but at a global level, which generated a very strong collective feeling. These collective efforts to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic demonstrated that when the community manages to prioritise and generate a prevailing shared understanding of the magnitude of a problem, societies react, even from very diverse contexts. It will be a challenge to mobilise this awareness to address other issues of similar magnitude, such as inequality, poverty and climate change, when the pandemic is no longer the priority.

Possible solutions

Despite the pause in volunteering programmes globally due to the pandemic and due to their face-to-face nature and high levels of contact, the need is not going away, and it is essential to reinvent and find new ways to connect with volunteers and communities. In order to achieve this, several mechanisms have been identified, including empowering families and community leaders, building resilience in communities, using different approaches and lines of support, and continuing the commitment to build together and support communities.

Two examples of these alternative approaches to volunteering are Paraguay and Brazil. The Paraguay national office is working extensively on communication at the local level in the settlements and 'bañados' - the neighbourhoods located in flood-prone areas in Asunción - to inform and raise awareness about the virus and thus prevent its spread. In addition, the Paraguay office signed an agreement with more than 20 organisations and the national government to work with community referrals and volunteers; this initiative aims to train community members, to increase outreach without exposing either volunteers or communities.

Other projects include the installation of 300 community sinks, the delivery of hygiene kits to 350 families and the installation of health posts, always working in line with the ODS-11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities. Likewise, sanitation and water have been prioritised, as well as support for the development of protocols in collaboration with other organisations at a national level in Paraguay.

In Brazil, several large digital campaigns were carried out, including the 'Uma Mão Lava Outra' campaign, through which 310 community batteries were installed to help favelas and other settlements. Also, hygiene kits were distributed nationally through community referrals, even in places where there was no previous Habitat access or presence. Finally, a project was implemented to support families of young people who contracted Zika during the 2015 epidemic by providing individualized hygiene kits considering the particular needs of these families.

Seeking to raise funds, the volunteers, volunteer ambassadors and influencers in Brazil also organised for the first time a live music festival via Facebook and YouTube, resulting in the creation of a support fund. In addition, the first pilot project of face-to-face volunteering was conducted by staff of the institution, to evaluate the possibility of safely re-establishing on-site volunteering activities. Several other projects were implemented, including the installation of urban mini-cisterns in settlements, as well as collaboration with other organisations and the establishment of alliances, for example by participating in sectoral roundtables to reach more families.

Due to the need to adapt the activities rapidly since the pandemic started, international voluntary service trips were interrupted and the organisations are currently relying on local volunteer structures. Moreover, distance voluntary activities have increased,

through which volunteers in other countries can continue to participate. There have been several activities in this field, including communication campaigns, as well as management activities for emergency funds and school support.

Online meetings are particularly important, since they preserve interpersonal connections and allow for complex experiences lived during the pandemic to be shared. These connections allow the volunteers to not feel isolated and that there are persons around the world who are living similar situations, despite different contexts. Some examples of projects carried out in this form are the project 'Hágalo Usted Mismo' - where volunteers learn to make ecological cleaning products and natural cosmetics recycling clubs, and various projects related to language learning.

In Argentina, the CCIIVS has implemented the programme 'Subir al Sur', through which the organisation supports secondary school students with difficulties to connect to the internet or to use digital tools. Volunteers support the students and their families - virtually in most cases, or with the appropriate precautions if the volunteers are part of the community - so they can learn to use digital tools in a self-sufficient manner. The goal is not only to give students the necessary tools to have access to education, but also to guarantee the contact with students and avoid school dropout, one of the main educational problems in Latin America.

Strategies to strengthen volunteering

Latin America and the Caribbean

To strengthen volunteerism in Latin America and the Caribbean, the National Volunteer Council (CONAVO) of Paraguay suggests two specific actions. First, to work towards the development of public policies and the regulation of Law 6,060/2018, thereby developing a regulatory framework that will lead to the creation of a Regulatory Decree. Second, the CONAVO should assume a leading role as a link between the state and civil society, combining and coordinating the efforts of the various actors.

One of the visibility activities is the Voluntary Service Congress. The first edition took place in 2018 in Buenos Aires, where over 300 representatives of institutions and volunteers participated. The second edition is planned to take place virtually on October 14-16, and will focus on three lines: education and voluntary services, intercultural volunteering and global citizenship, and voluntary services policies and challenges during the pandemic and afterwards.

Seeking to understand the volunteer ecosystem in Latin America, France Volontaires Ecuador, with the support of the French Regional Cooperation, France Volontaires Peru, the Embassy of France in Ecuador, and the Latinoamerican Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) organised the regional seminar 'A world in movement: development, cooperation and international solidarity through volunteering'. This summit took place

in November 2019 in Quito, and included the participation of State and civil society actors from Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. The participants shared experiences and different approaches regarding regional challenges for the development of voluntary services and the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030 commitments; the discussions covered topics such as the role of voluntary services in social cohesion, sustainable development, national and local public policies, good practices and social innovations in volunteerism, alliances and networking, among others.

This encounter recognised the potential existing in the region in the field of voluntary services through the exchange of experiences and to identify voluntary service organisations worldwide, who work in different manners, but have a common goal: the development of volunteerism. This diversity in the perspectives is a strength for creating joint projects or programmes, strengthening the capabilities of organisations, and promoting the establishment of new national networks. That was the case of Ecuador, where the summit fostered the creation of a new voluntary service network with the participation of referential organisations and which also includes new organisations and areas.

Another significant result of the regional seminary was the creation of a solidarity fund for innovative projects, supported by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in cooperation with France Volontaires. The main objective is to energize the mobilisation of volunteers within the five countries in the region, through studies on voluntary work, the development of projects to strengthen the capabilities of organisations, the support to innovative initiatives and the development of voluntary missions. This project is still being developed, and the strategies and best partners are yet to be established; however, it is an example of the importance of a cooperation between the State and the civil society in developing a solid ecosystem that strengthens the cooperation and international solidarity.

Because its mandate is part of an international policy from the French State, France Volontaires receives strong support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This public-private alliance has ensured that, thanks to the efforts of various actors, quality voluntary service missions have been developed.

The experience, support, will and convergence of various actors have allowed volunteerism to strengthen. This regional seminar brought together several committed actors and allowed the exchange of experiences, knowledge and good practices in the field, which will be reflected in a publication. Voluntary service needs to generate knowledge; there have been several experiences and lessons learned through the work of the organisations, but there has not been a consolidation of all the information. The challenge now is to create a repository of this information that allows any interested actor to have access and use this knowledge.

Especially for Latin America and the Caribbean, the narrative of volunteerism and its impact in the region, regardless of the sector or the context, is intended to be a

cohesive one; so that despite the differences among countries and the particular needs, a common language is shared that allows to identify the same challenges between the countries and propose similar solutions for similar problems. With this objective in mind, four challenges were identified as the most significant for the region:

1. Recognising volunteerism as a tool to address inequalities and social tensions, understanding that inequalities are one of the main problems that the region faces.
2. Strengthen strategic alliances and inclusive networks to promote voluntary service.
3. Enable safe and protected environments so that volunteers can perform their tasks, recognising the need to strengthen the normative and institutional frameworks, as well as the measures for the protection and security of the volunteers.

International

To achieve this, France Volontaires created a network of collaborators that includes the French diplomatic representations, and 40 French international voluntary service organisations. The establishment of these cooperation networks has been fundamental to achieve the objectives of the organisation, by strengthening the cooperation and international solidarity ties, promoting the mobilisation of volunteers, the exchange of experiences and common knowledge, and the support of sustainable development. In this sense, the purpose of France Volontaires is to inform and accompany the volunteers, create networks between them and the organisations and generate spaces for dialogue on this topic.

These network efforts are done at several levels. Within the organisation, there is a network of 23 offices worldwide, known as volunteer spaces. The organisation has regional representatives, both in France and in the continents where it works. Additionally, France Volontaires has established a network of volunteers and ex volunteers that remain in contact after finishing their service.

Outside the organisation, they collaborate with French organisations in the same platform, as well as with international and local organisations that receive French volunteers to collaborate with their development projects. International voluntary service is concentrated in Asia, Africa and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. France Volontaires has been present in Latin America for eight years through two regional offices, in Peru and in Ecuador, mobilizing an average of 700 volunteers per year. Regarding reciprocal voluntary service, the association closely collaborates with Germany and Norway, looking to replicate the good practices of these countries in other European countries.

Encouraging voluntary youth participation

There are many initiatives by various international volunteer organisations that seek to create spaces for reflection on this issue. The uncertainty of the current context poses great challenges, but five elements were identified to guide volunteer work in a post-pandemic era.

First, to recognise that volunteering is neither fixed in form nor a single model, but requires constant rethinking and consideration of the evolving society and context. In this sense, it is necessary to consider the realities of each country in the post-pandemic context and to adapt and create new volunteer programmes at the national and international levels. In many countries in the region, organisations have been limited by the closure of borders and by the lack of health conditions, which led to a reorientation of activities, strengthening national volunteering. Moreover, it must be considered that the needs of each country are generated by the negative impact of the pandemic at a socio-economic and political level. The problem must be understood in a comprehensive manner, with the objective of developing new missions, guiding existing missions, prioritising projects and valuing the role and participation of volunteers in facing these new challenges.

The second element to consider is the involvement of volunteers in generating ideas. Volunteers want to develop new initiatives and innovations to find new solutions to problems and they have the capacity to do so. It is necessary that the organisations promote meeting spaces for volunteers, where they have the opportunity to share new proposals to deal with social problems. For example, in Ecuador a virtual volunteering initiative was carried out, which allowed the inclusion of almost 1000 young university volunteers during the pandemic to support families in times of confinement. The power of young people and their commitment should not be underestimated; their input, experience and vision of how they see volunteering in a post-pandemic era is needed.

The third element is to strengthen the capacities of organisations working and managing volunteerism. A survey of organisations in Ecuador identified that only 10% of the organisations that responded used technology in their management; not all had the capacity to work with virtual forms of volunteering, even though in reality this model of volunteering was the one that could be implemented during the pandemic. Many organisations, particularly local ones, had to adapt their missions, activities and objectives without having the required capacities. Seeking to develop volunteerism comprehensively requires commitment from those organisations that have experience in building these competencies to accompany those that do, helping them to develop their own capacities.

The fourth element to be considered is the need to adapt to the current conditions of mobility. International volunteers were unable to travel because of the restrictions, and many volunteers who had already arrived were forced to return to their countries.

Virtual volunteering has become a means to continue supporting missions, despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

Finally, the development of sustainable volunteer programmes should be a priority. In this sense, the French system of volunteer programmes serves as a model, as it provides funding and tools for the development of missions. The French civic service offers the volunteer a monthly compensation and international health insurance, thus allowing young people to carry out long-term missions in dignified conditions. Such conditions are not common in the context of Latin American volunteering; it is important to reconceptualize volunteering as a valuable sector to which funding must be allocated. In the post-pandemic era, a regional volunteering programme could be created with a financial contribution, establishing a common fund that allows for the mobility of young people, giving them an incentive but also ensuring social recognition.

Many countries face the same issues and challenges today, and organisations need to respond to them. However, in order to achieve this, it is necessary that they receive support regarding management and financing; that laws and public policies are designed to guarantee the development of volunteering, as well as the strengthening of the capacities of the entities and above all the social recognition of volunteering as a fundamental element for social participation and cohesion.

Promoting the recruitment of volunteers

There have been many changes and uncertainties regarding security, and it is essential to adapt and propose a safe reunion between volunteers, staff of the organisations and the communities. This must be achieved from the grassroots up, starting to work on simple issues with community references and the community, such as explaining to the communities that it is not possible at this time to share water or food, to hug each other, and that the contact of the families with the volunteers will be limited temporarily. Habitat's speciality before the pandemic was international volunteering, with the Global Village programme; however, in order to maintain security conditions, it was necessary to focus on the local.

However, the organisation is already preparing to mobilise international volunteers when conditions improve in different phases. New protocols are being developed at various levels, including logistics and volunteer management as well as protocols and regulations for action in the field, such as restrictions on sharing water and beverages, maintaining distance in public transport, and eliminating shared rooms between volunteers.

Due to the conditions in the region, EU-LAC volunteering will not enter the first phase. Instead, regional volunteering and inter-regional travel will be prioritised to ensure a higher degree of safety through direct flights. The idea is to find mitigation mechanisms that are officially and internationally proposed by the organisation, while

also considering the opinion of community leaders, who help to identify the needs and realities of the communities, so that the biosecurity protocols make sense.



EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC

WEBINARIOS EU-LAC SOBRE COVID19:

DESAFÍOS E INNOVACIONES PARA PROMOVER EL VOLUNTARIADO EN LA UE Y AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE EN LA ÉPOCA POST COVID19



Ministerio de
RELACIONES EXTERIORES



Secretaría
TÉCNICA DE PLANIFICACIÓN DEL DESARROLLO ECONÓMICO Y SOCIAL

INAUGURACIÓN

LUNES, 14 DE SEPTIEMBRE
16:00H CEST / 10:00H PARAGUAY

INSCRIPCIÓN PREVIA
(LINK EN LA PUBLICACIÓN)

PANELISTAS

 Felipe Salomón Ministro - Secretario Ejecutivo de la Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud de Paraguay	 Daisy Hume Presidenta del Consejo Nacional de Voluntariado de Paraguay	 Sofia Mejia Gerente de programas de voluntariado y campaña global Hábitat para la Humanidad Intern., Oficina ALC	 Rocio Vergara Coordinadora nacional, Programa de Voluntarios de las Naciones Unidas, Ecuador
 Adrián Bonilla Director Ejecutivo de la Fundación EU-LAC	 Rolando Kandel Director adjunto Fundación SES y vicepresidente para América de CCIVS	 Stefany Paez Responsable de France Volontaires en Ecuador	 Eunice Rivas Moderadora Directora de Focalización Territorial, STP Paraguay

LOS/AS PANELISTAS HABLARÁN EN ESPAÑOL, SIN INTERPRETACIÓN

For the recording of the webinar: <https://vimeo.com/458062989>

3. EU-LAC WEBINAR:

'CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE COVID-19 ERA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES'

The Webinar on 'Circular Economy in the COVID-19 Era: Challenges and Opportunities' took place on 24 November 2020 and was jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the EU-LAC Foundation within the framework of the LAC days organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. The seminar was moderated by Ernesto Jeger, Programme Manager of the EU-LAC Foundation. The [recording](#) is available on the EU-LAC Foundation's [Website](#).

The objective of the Webinar was to provide a platform to share experiences and good practices, shed light upon projects and advancements, and to raise awareness on the importance of circularity, which provides an alternative to traditional notions of a linear economy. In particular, the potential of a circular economy for a green recovery post-COVID-19 and the importance of global cooperation were emphasised. The structure of the Webinar was divided into three panels, which were dedicated to: global outreach, national circular pathways and multilateral platforms.

The webinar brought together a diverse range of leading experts, including Stanislav Raščan (State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia), Adrián Bonilla (Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation), Marjeta Jager and Thibaut Portevin (Directorate-General for Development Cooperation of the European Commission), Ladeja Godina Košir (European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform - ECESP), Circular Change Institute for Circular Economy), Janja Kreitmayer McKenzie (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia), Beatriz Luz (Exchange4Change Brasil), Linnet Solway (EuroChile), Fernando Brites (Kora Paraguay), Izabella Teixeira (International Resources Panel, Former Minister for Environment of Brazil) and Denise Hamú (UNEP Brazil).

Experiences from Slovenia, Pro Tempore Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2021

Slovenia, as many other EU member states, has included Latin America in its foreign policy strategy, recognising the cultural connectedness between the two as well as Latin Americans political standing at the global level, its economic potential and its role as the new home to several Slovenian communities. There is an extensive set of guidelines composed of strategic and policy documents on the EU-level, among them the joint [EU- LAC communication](#) and the joint declaration of partnership with

the Pacific Alliance, both from 2019. Yet, the documents are only as strong as their practical implementation. Slovenia has promoted to bring together the two regions with international conferences in the frame of the “LAC Days”, whose main purpose is to forge cooperation in the areas of economics, science, research and culture with a special emphasis on the environment, water, forests and renewable energies.

The effects of climate change and the COVID-19 crisis have exposed the unsustainable nature of our economic world model and our relationship with nature. Unless we radically change course, we will soon need another planet to live on. On the other hand, this profound crisis has allowed us to build back a greener and more resilient world by transforming the way we live, produce, consume, and interact with nature.

Slovenia was one of the first countries to recognise the necessity for transformation from linear development to a regenerative, circular model in which resource use is decoupled from economic growth. The circular economy has become an intrinsic part of Slovenia’s strategic development agenda and remains a key element for its post-COVID-19 recovery plan. Slovenia believes that this will bring about a more sustainable, inclusive, resilient and just socio-economic system, that will be able to preserve the planet and its resources for future generations. The Slovenian government is willing to share its experiences of embedding transition to a circular economy into all relevant strategic national documents and their cross-sectional multi-stakeholder approach in applying the transition.

In collaboration with the European Commission Slovenia aims at decarbonisation through the transition to a circular economy. The nationwide project, including a multitude of stakeholders, follows a system-based logic to enable the decarbonisation process of Slovenia’s social-economic system, based on certain circular economy principles. The circular economy will be among the priorities of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2021 and has been included in the working programme of the presidency trio Germany-Portugal-Slovenia.

The European Union has adopted an ambitious action plan on the circular economy as far as the Green Deal and green recovery implementation. It is impossible to undertake such profound systemic and cultural change alone in an intrinsically interconnected world. As part of its action plan, the EU envisions a global alliance promoting a circular economy and resource efficiency. It is expected to be launched in the frame of the fifth meeting of the EU environmental assembly in February 2021. The EU will look for synergies with a Latin American regional alliance for a circular economy and Slovenia will actively promote alliances as well as the need to promote these alliances globally.

A bi-regional perspective on circular economy

For the EU-LAC Foundation both Slovenia and the panellists’ presence is fundamental, as they allow it to fulfil its main objectives; to contribute to the strengthening of the

EU-LAC strategic partnership, involving participation and inputs of civil society and other actors to encourage further mutual knowledge and understanding between the two regions. The Foundation is an international, intergovernmental organisation, composed of the EU and LAC member countries. Its mandate comes from the decisions of the Heads of State, and, for instance, the EU-CELAC action plan designed in 2015 in Brussels. The Heads of State decided to seek the necessary financial resources that will contribute to sustainable development, biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use as well as adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. They wanted to ensure the coordination of activities, aiming at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, taking into account the different capabilities of the countries. They also wanted to promote the development of projects in the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Finally, they wanted to support capacity building on safe and sustainable low carbon technology and low emission strategies, climate change, monitoring greenhouse gas emissions, reporting and verification of forest and soil management, among other issues.

Conventional definitions of the concept of the circular economy focus on reducing raw material use, reducing products and components, recycling and reuse of raw materials. Global warming is one of the most conspicuous global issues and cannot be solved through unilateral, bilateral or even regional policies. The policies have to be global and one of the conceptual instruments to cope with this challenge is the circular economy. Trillions of dollars of economic stimulus are being made available around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Goals for recovery, in line with other global challenges, have never been stronger. This is why many have used the expression “build back better”, which means an opportunity to build a resilient, low carbon economy recovery.

To achieve this goal, societies need to take decisive action that focuses on safeguarding national economies during crises to pave the way for a broader economic transformation that is more resilient to future global risks. The circular economy is a concrete means to achieving this vision and is now more relevant than ever, as it presents an opportunity for an inclusive and resource-smart future. It is an opportunity for both regions to undertake a transformation that responds with the ambition needed to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to adapt to a world with limited resources.

Circular Economy and Global Outreach

EU strategies for implementing the circular economy

The EU is committed to promoting a green transition and a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not only important to “build back better”, but also to “build back green”, and the circular economy can contribute to such a green recovery, for example by making value chains more resilient and by promoting actions in job intensive sectors.

To achieve the goals of the Circular Economy Action Plan, all the EU policy tools and policy areas have to be exhausted, among them trade and international development cooperation, as well as outreach and diplomacy which are essential to promote the transition to the circular economy at the global level. Over the past years, there already has been a lot of outreach from the EU on the circular economy. One of the ambitions of the new action plan is to continue further circular economy missions, which consists in policy and business dialogue with the government, the private sector and stakeholders in partner countries to share experiences, discuss the transition and identify opportunities for cooperation and business. A number of these missions have already been carried out at the global level, including various countries in Latin America, among them Chile, Colombia and Mexico. Other missions are foreseen although they have been put on hold for the moment due to the sanitary crisis.

In the context of the development and pursuit of a Green Deal Diplomacy, various outreach activities have been organised by the EU to promote a green recovery, using The Green Deal as a compass. Furthermore, a global circular economy alliance dialogue among governments is going to be established, to build knowledge and develop global governance for a circular economy.

The Circular Change Institute was founded because of the need to recognise the different change-makers in different countries. Policy reports and the many important guidelines are fundamental, but without people who are working on the ground, change cannot happen. Circular Change welcomes collaboration and stakeholder engagement and tries to identify the change-makers to empower them to contribute to the process of transformation. Circular Change engages with small and large companies, government agencies, cities, non-profits, researchers, creatives and the media in collaborative projects to co-create circular economy solutions, projects reports, events, and more. Creative innovations and a new mindset are essential to actually “build back better”.

However, it is not only about building back, but about rethinking the entire system. Our health system has collapsed and severe challenges within, e.g. the educational system and the food system, have become apparent. We are facing the climate crisis and the pandemic crisis simultaneously and only through a holistic understanding and a systemic approach can we jointly create solutions.

The EU developed the Green Deal as a compass, showing the direction towards a green transition. Its goals are to increase the EU’s climate ambition for 2030 and 2050, to supply clean, affordable, secure energy, to mobilise industry for a clean and circular economy, to build and renovate in an energy and resource efficient way. It aims at zero pollution for a toxic-free environment, preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system, and accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility. The transition to the Green Deal requires financing and has to be just, leaving no one behind. Given this policy framework, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, repeatedly stresses that

this recovery has to be green. Now that 750 billion Euros have been allocated by the EU, they will hopefully be invested wisely to rebuild a thriving economy and society.

The circular economy stakeholder platform gave some suggestions to the Circular Economy Action Plan, which allows the different actors to find guidelines for their transformation, concerning policies or value chains. It focuses on specific sectors, e.g. construction or the fashion industry, yet they all face similar challenges and are inherently interconnected and interdependent. Only through collaboration can problems be solved to fulfil the idea of a circular economy, which is to maintain value.

The [Circular Economy Action Plan 2020](#) deals with:

1. Sustainable Product Policy: Designing sustainable products, empowering consumers and public buyers, circularity in production processes;
2. Key Product value chains: Electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and building, food water and nutrients;
3. Less Waste more Value: Enhanced waste policy. Wwaste prevention, circularity, enhancing circularity in a toxic-free environment, creating EU market for secondary raw materials, addressing waste exports from the EU;
4. Cross-Cutting Actions: Circularity as a prerequisite for climate neutrality, getting the economics right, driving the transition through research, innovation and digitalisation.

It is crucial to collaborate with different countries to learn from each other. EuroChile, for instance, included in its Circular Economy Roadmapping Process the idea of a circular culture to the core of the document. While the economy is important, culture is equally as central in achieving the transition. A circular economy means more than just efficient waste management, but rather to pursue a holistic approach, already addressing the first stages of production as well as our patterns of thought and behaviour and the traditions and the values we share.

EU-LAC cooperation for circular economy

The environmental and climate crisis and the transition to a sustainable economy require global action in line with The Green Deal and also green alliances with other countries. The EU aims to lead the transition by setting the example, combining diplomacy, trade policy and cooperation. Global outreach is a priority of the new EU action plan for the Circular Economy and Latin America and the Caribbean are essential for this global transition. The region's ecosystems, especially the Amazon, are of incredible environmental value but they are under severe threat.

By acknowledging these challenges, the region is showing leadership in regards to the circular economy, promoting new initiatives such as a Latin America Circular Economy Coalition. The growing cooperation increasingly reflects the importance of the circular

economy, evidenced in, for example, the Switch To Green Facility, the Partnership For Action On The Green Economy in Uruguay and AL-Invest Verde, the programme for Latin America that was approved this month and which aims at promoting growth and jobs through a low carbon economy.

Besides outreach, the implementation of cooperation programmes, promoting the circular economy, is an important priority for the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO). There is the intention to work even more closely with EU member states in the context of international cooperation. Currently, the EU cooperation priorities, for the seven coming years in line with the EU budget cycle period 2021-2027, are being programmed. A key characteristic is the development of Team Europe Initiatives in partnership with the European Commission and EU member states.

There are four main areas of cooperation which reflect the needs and the drivers of transition. The first is about developing knowledge about the circular economy and its potential benefits for employment, tackling climate change and the reduction of pollution. Documentation evidence of these contributions is becoming more available within the EU but there is still a need for more evidence at the global level. There are several initiatives in Latin America, for example, the Green Economic Coalition, which promotes civil society participation in policy development and contributes to raise awareness and build societal support for circular economy reforms. Another important area of action is the development of enabling, regulatory policy frameworks as the circular economy is a relatively new policy area. Economic and environmental policies have to be coherent.

DG DEVCO supports the “Switch to Green” initiative, developing a circular economy strategy in Colombia, as well as the “Partnership for Action on Green Economy” in Uruguay. There is a recognition that a circular economy can be an important contribution to climate action and there is growing emphasis on the circular economy as a tool that needs to be present in the Nationally Determined Contributions for Climate Change (NDCs). This is reflected, for example, in the funding of the NDC partnership.

Even when there is a clear business case for greener practices by the private sector, access to finance remains a barrier for the transition to a circular economy, especially when significant investment is required. The EU promotes financing for a circular economy through different means, among them AL-Invest, working on studies and promoting dialogue between development partners, the business community and investors. Other initiatives try to develop risk-sharing mechanisms through blending mechanisms to facilitate investments in green sectors. The fourth area of action is engagement with the private sector, including support to enterprises, specifically micro, small and medium-sized companies but also with larger industries. One example is the MiPyme COMPITE programme in Paraguay that supports the private sector and SMEs, integrating circular economy, low carbon development and other green practices.

National circular pathways

National strategies and actions for the circular economy in the EU

The Slovenian government started its circular economy agenda in 2014, recognising that the transition to a circular economy is a process, encompassing a profound change of our way of thinking and society. It means to change how we behave, how we produce and how we consume. Communication was decided to be a key strategy for the journey. Therefore, a new governance structure, called the Partnership for a Green Economy, was created. Back in 2014, it seemed too soon to name the core model “circular economy” as there was still little understanding of the concept and it might have seemed too radical.

Instead, it was decided to first study the atmosphere on the ground and to slowly introduce the concept of the circular economy. The partnership was composed of an intersectoral group of state secretaries of seven core ministries, and it was opened to all stakeholders in Slovenia, allowing for more than two thousand partners to join. The main objective of this platform was to facilitate an open dialogue between government and stakeholders, to work on solutions together.

Besides addressing the business sector, cities were also identified as key enablers for the transition to a circular economy, as they are the communities that we live in and are therefore the most in touch with their citizens, much more than the national government. They are also in charge of providing a variety of services and managing resources and waste, which in a circular economy is a resource as well. Slovenia is divided into 12 statistical regions who each have regional development agencies and municipalities. In cooperation with them the communities and businesses in these regions were motivated to join and to discuss potential opportunities together.

The “[Framework Programme for a Transition to a Green Economy](#)”, which was adopted in 2015, was the first official document, setting up this partnership for a green economy and also laying out the first steps of the transition process. The “[Roadmap Towards The Circular Economy](#)” was the second important document, launched in 2018 and based on bottom-up knowledge on the opportunities for circular transition in Slovenia. It highlighted several focus areas as the first or most efficient to address in the transition to a circular economy based on Slovene characteristics and also gave recommendations to the government for the actions for a future systemic approach. It was purposely launched at the Circular Change Conference.

After the launching of this document, implementation was needed. Together with eit Climate-KIC, eit RawMaterials and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the “Deep Demonstration of a Circular Regenerative Economy in Slovenia” project was initiated, designed to embed a true and more permanent change than just specific measures. It entails three vertical pillars, which are 1) to create

circular communities, 2) to foster circular development and 3) circular policy design and science. These pillars are supported by three horizontal programmes.

The most important one is the “Centre for Smart and Circular Transition”, which is responsible for the coordination and orchestration of all these activities and for embedding a hub for the circular economy of the region, which will be an important podium for international cooperation. Another horizontal programme is “Transformation Capital for Circular Economy”, whose purpose is to blend the finances between the private and the public sector to create more value for investment. Finally, the “Circular Transition Pilots” will be testing all these initiatives in practice, encompassing five value chains (production, building, mobility, food, wood).

The most important part of the efforts toward circularity is cooperation and partnership. Instead of having many individual projects, the idea is to coordinate systemic change together. For this reason, the project englobes various cooperation partners, including eit Climate-KIC, eit RawMaterials, various ministries (Environment; Spatial Planning; Education, Science and Sport; Economic Development and Technology; Agriculture, Forestry and Food; Infrastructure; Finance; Foreign Affairs; Public Administration and the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy), the Joint Research Centre and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia itself.

Likewise, international cooperation is essential to exchange best practices and knowledge, allowing for the creation of new concepts. Circular Economy is not a fixed and fully developed concept but is open to innovations, new ideas about how to improve business models and how to implement this process. Slovenia has now entered the implementation phase and will start the programme as soon as the last financial and legal details are settled. For the Ministry, green recovery and a green economy are priorities.

As much negativity as the COVID-19 pandemic has brought, it presents a unique opportunity for the concept of a circular economy to gain momentum, as it not only addresses the economy but also our quality of life and aims at enabling us to be resilient enough to cope with crises. Circular economy models are offering answers and solutions to improve everything from our lives, to preserve natural resources and to make the economy competitive and to help it survive.

National strategies and actions for circular economy in LAC

Brazil

In Brazil, the conversation about circularity was initiated in 2015, starting with awareness- raising. One of the main contributors to this process was the Ellen MacArthur Foundation which opened her first chapter in Latin America in Brazil. In 2017, the industry’s strategic map for the next four years was launched, including

the circular economy as a key element for industry development. With the support of UNIDO, E4CB started the development of a road map on the circular economy in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay. Now is the moment to engage the industry, taking into account all the information and the possibilities around a circular economy in order to create a new mindset.

E4CB has learned three main lessons from their journey, the first one being, that technology is only one part that has to be complemented by a profound cultural change and policy development. The current COVID-19 scenario has demonstrated the interconnectedness of the world, and the importance of working along the supply chain and of helping everyone. By evidencing the need for not only the large, but also the small and medium-sized companies, the pandemic is promoting the mindset of the circular economy.

The second lesson is the need to understand the interconnectivity of all supply chains, based on information gathered by science to co-create solutions. E4CB is working to influence the transition not just on the industry level but also in agriculture and construction, attempting to connect the sectors and to find solutions beyond company boundaries. One example of this is how 3,000 ventilators, that were found broken, were repaired together with the automotive industry, saving almost 300 million Reais. Another case of unusual connections during the pandemic is the collaboration between Ambev, a brewery, Gerdau, a steel manufacturer, and a start-up called Brasil ao Cubo to build a hospital in only 40 days, demonstrating the immense potential of working together towards a common goal.

Thirdly, E4CB has learned that there is a need for new rules, new values and new governance. Companies have to initiate this process but they cannot do it alone or within their company boundaries. Besides a vision and an inside strategy, it is necessary to create a suitable ecosystem to develop partnerships, to build trust and collaboration. Since the Circular Economy Brazilian Hub and despite these unusual times, there are now 13 companies, determined to work together, breaking barriers and developing a Circular Economy in practice in Brazil.

More than 16 experts are currently working on a new book, as the market still needs a lot of education and understanding. It is necessary to create networks, share knowledge, learn from mistakes and move forward. It is necessary to look beyond product design, recycling and materials flow and to shift our focus to collaborating, developing new commercial relationships and value creation in order to achieve this new economic balance among all of us.

Chile

EuroChile was created nearly 28 years ago to foster the links between the EU and Chile. Since March 2020 EuroChile has been supporting the ministry in creating its own

circular economy roadmap. Chile extends over 4,000 kilometres along the Pacific coast, from the Peruvian desert in the north to just before Antarctica in the south. In between, there are more deserts, wine countries, rainforests and dense urban centres like Santiago and Valparaíso, concentrating over 50% of the population. All these regional differences concerning climate, resources, geography and access to infrastructure, have to be considered when developing a circular economy roadmap for such a diverse country.

Back in 2016, the Framework for Waste Management, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Promotion of Recycling law was finally passed after 10 years of discussions. It entails six priority products: lubricating oils, packaging, batteries, electric and electronic equipment, tyres and car batteries. Additionally, there are currently two supreme decrees to establish the objectives for two of those six products, packaging and tyres, which are foreseen to start being implemented in 2023. In August 2018, Chile was the first Latin American country to ban plastic bags. On the 3rd of August of this year, all plastic bags were forbidden, including small businesses and markets. This may look like a small step, but it's a way of promoting and making these changes visible in our everyday lives.

A year later, in April 2019, Chile was the third country - and the first in Latin America - to join the Plastic Pact, an initiative by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, englobing various companies, ministries and institutions. This year, the ministry has been working on the national strategy for organic waste, which was presented a couple of months ago to public consultation, so it is expected to be published by the end of the year. At the same time, in May 2020 the supreme decree on the recycling goals for the packaging sector was voted on.

There were a great variety of strategies and of additional private and public initiatives, which were mostly led individually. For this reason, the ministry decided that there was a need for a national, cross-cutting waste strategy, encompassing all other initiatives. Consequently, they launched the circular economy roadmap, which was first mentioned nearly two years ago, in December 2018. EuroChile together with the Ministry of the Environment and UNIDO organised a circular economy forum in Santiago, where the Ministry inaugurated the development of this national circular economy roadmap. The first step was the initial mapping of all the actors that are currently involved and of those who should be involved in the circular economy.

At the beginning of this year, the actual construction of the national circular economy roadmap began, led by four main organisations: the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of the Economy, Corfo, the Promotion and Development Agency in Chile and Agencia de Sustentabilidad y Cambio Climático. The process is further supported by EuroChile and CBI, the Consensus Building Institute. These six organisations form the executive committee, coordinating, leading and carrying out the entire process.

The Chilean circular economy roadmap process has five main objectives: The first is to connect the key actors in Chile. Second, to imagine what a "Chile Circular" future will

look like in 20 years, considering the roadmap's time frame is 2020-2040. Thirdly, to reach a consensus regarding specific and essential changes that must happen to achieve the vision, for example, a complete change in the structure of waste management. Landfilling a ton of waste costs around ten dollars, whereas composting organic waste costs approximately 30 dollars, showing the need for a new system, where the costs reflect the real impact of each strategy. The fourth objective is to design a strategy and the action plan that will lead Chile to be a circular territory. Finally, a key aspect is to position the topic of a circular economy in the country. It is not enough that only a small group of elite organisations know about the concept, it needs to spread through all organisations, all levels of society and reach all of us as people and as citizens.

Besides the executive committee, there is also a strategic committee which is made up of 30 organisations, including two representatives of academia, five civil society organisations, ten representatives of the private sector, approximately nine ministries and five other public institutions, such as municipalities, which are key in this implementation. The beginning of this process in March coincided with the first registration of COVID-19 cases in Chile. Nonetheless, the urgency of the matter did not allow to postpone the work, also considering the opportunity to influence the ways of rebuilding the economy.

Also, the Chilean Minister of the Environment, Carolina Schmidt¹, has been very involved in the making of the road map, as well as the Minister of the Economy, showing commitment from the highest level. The circular economy is a commitment by the Chilean government in the newest NDC's, including the national strategy for organic waste, which is underway, secondly the Chilean roadmap and thirdly to create a monitoring framework for a circular economy.

The main objectives of the Chilean circular economy roadmap include job creation through the circular economy (+ 100.000 for 2030, +180.000 for 2040), an objective on municipal solid waste generation per capita (-10% for 2030, -25% for 2040), a municipal solid waste recycling rate (30% for 2030, 65% for 2040), waste generation in relation to GDP (-15 % for 2030, -30% for 2040), and the general recycling rate (40% for 2030, 75% for 2040). The civil society is requesting to include an objective that reflects that a circular economy is not only beneficial for the economy and the environment, but also for the people and their quality of life. An objective like this is currently worked on, showing that the circular economy is good for society as a whole and everyone living in Chile.

Paraguay

Taking into account the social, geographical and economic context of Paraguay in 2018 the NGO KORA Paraguay was founded to publicise the principles of a circular economy and sustainability in Paraguay. It considers the circular economy as strategic for the country and seeks to contribute to the generation of public policies. Although the degree of knowledge and incorporation of the principles of a circular economy is

still incipient in Paraguay, in almost three years of work, the NGO has witnessed and participated in the great steps that the country has taken. This, to a large extent, is due to the support from international cooperation for the development of projects related to the circular economy.

For example, the MiPyme Compite Programme started in 2019, with a four-year duration and with an investment of 12 million Euros, to strengthen and improve public services and to increase the competitiveness of companies and their integration into value chains. This programme is financed by the European Union and executed through key partners in the public and private sectors and the business environment, such as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the European Union, the Paraguayan Federation of Production Cooperatives, the Organisations of Nations United for Industrial Development and the World Bank. Although circularity is not the main objective in this programme, it contemplates developing activities to promote it in the country, such as the realisation last week of the Latin American Circular Economy Forum, which was held digitally. Furthermore, a regional project was started this year for the diagnosis of the current situation of the circular economy and the development of a roadmap in Paraguay in conjunction with Ecuador, El Salvador, Cuba and the Dominican Republic through the Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN).

Likewise, the Inter-American Development Bank group started in 2020 the execution of the project for the promotion of a circular economy this year, whose general objective is to improve environmental and health conditions, and economic opportunities in the vulnerable neighbourhoods of Chacarita Alta and San Francisco in Asunción, by promoting circular business models. For next year, the preparation of a Circular Economy Action Plan for Lake Ypacaraí, one of the main tourist destinations for the inhabitants of Asunción, is planned. Through this Action Plan, it is intended to incorporate the concept of “wastewater into resources” as a basis for the sustainable management of this hydric resource.

Paraguay is located at the heart of South America and has a population of a little bit more than 7.1 million people of which 50% are under the age of 26 and 64% are within the working age range. Among the country's main import products are fuels and petroleum derivatives, vehicles and their spare parts, computers, telecommunications and electronic equipment, fertilizers, textiles, agrochemicals, plastics, iron, steel, paper, cardboard, footwear, etc. The main export products are soybeans, rice, wheat, corn, sorghum (either in grains or in oil), meat and its derivatives, wood and charcoal.

In short, Paraguay is an importer of short-lived consumer goods and an exporter of products in their natural state. The average urban solid waste generation rate is around 1.2 kg per person per day. Solid waste management is a complex task and a serious problem in Paraguay due to multiple factors such as 1) population growth, 2) the increasing amount of waste generated, 3) the low quality of urban sanitation services and 4) institutional weakness, little health education and citizen participation. Concerning public policies, the main planning tool is the 2030 National Development Plan, that

links the SDGs with the country's goals and that seeks to move from an economy based on natural resources towards an economy of knowledge, equal opportunities and the eradication of extreme poverty. The principles of a circular economy are directly related, to a greater or lesser extent, to 10 of the 12 objectives.

The barriers and challenges Paraguay is facing are very similar across the region and can be divided into four areas.

1. Policies and regulation: lack of effective tax and incentive policies and examining the regulatory frameworks so that products are more durable and the formation of a public- private platform, that encourages and supports circular ventures.
2. Cultural acceptance: lack of knowledge about the circular economy approach and its benefits, as well as the lack of environmental awareness of consumers and producers.
3. Access to financing: to adopt new technological models and generation of circular products and services.
4. Technologies and Infrastructures: lack of knowledge and technical skills to incorporate the circular economy model. It is necessary to measure the flow of materials to generate greater knowledge and understanding of the life cycle of products and to be able to close the production cycles.

Regarding the potentials and opportunities that a circular economy represents in Paraguay, it is worth mentioning that materials such as aluminium, steel, copper, iron and bronze were recovered at the country level for export, totalling more than 200,000 tons at a value greater than USD 102 million, in only one year without having or counting data on the large volume of materials that are recovered and commercialised informally in the local market.

Additionally, organic waste (mainly food and plant waste), which represents approximately 60 % of the volume of waste that is sent to landfills, present an opportunity as these materials could be reused for energy purposes (generation of biogas or electricity). The latter will probably not compete with the price of hydroelectric energy plants, but it can be a source of raw material for the generation of fertilisers, which is among the top ten imported items.

Another opportunity for the country could be Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). 4.9 to 6.8 kg/year of WEEE have been generated between 2014 and 2017. According to studies, Paraguay is one of the largest generators of WEEE among the LAC countries. This is a problem but it also represents a 65 million USD opportunity, considering its potential value as a raw material.

This transition is not an easy, fast or cheap task and more efficient and effective mechanisms must be created, for extended producer responsibility, the implementation of reverse logistics processes, the transformation of business models and the generation of financing sources. The good news is that these and other possibilities are already

included in the country presentation “Paraguay - Country of Opportunities” designed by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to attract foreign investors and sustainable business opportunities.

Although the circular economy was included in the energy and materials strategy, specifically in the automotive and the home appliances sector, it is also directly related to other sectors such as the reduction of food waste in the supply chain, energy efficiency, product reformulation and electric mobility.

Multilateral Platforms

COVID-19 probably won't be the only crisis that the world will be facing in this century. There is a multiplicity of disruptive processes in the world, regarding the relationship between nature and humankind. Deforestation, for instance, can provoke disruption of the equilibrium of the forests' ecological cycles. It is necessary to face these risks and our vulnerabilities, to which the circular economy can be a solution.

The pandemic provoked and demanded investments that raised the public debt around the world, not only in developing but also in developed economies. This enormous fiscal debt has to be paid by future generations. Therefore, to make decisions today in favour of a green recovery and sustainability is a pragmatic choice, allowing for sustainable economic growth in the future and bringing the world together.

It is crucial to find new ways of clustering global movements, transcending nationalities and borders. Circularity has to be inclusive so that it is possible to move from a “winner vs. losers” to a “win-win” situation, not just for the conservation of the environment, but for the well-being of all. No one should be left behind, especially in the informal sector.

The International Resource Panel

The International Resource Panel understands that business as usual is no longer an option. In order to create a new “business as usual”, they provide scientific information on relevant policy processes. The goal is the sustainable management of natural resources, including better, smarter use of materials, biomass, fossil fuels and non-metallic minerals. New ways of approaching nature, decoupling economic growth and environmental impact, are being developed.

In 2020, a [report](#) on climate change was published, illustrating efficient use of resources and the international climate strategy, aiming to cut emissions and to address development. The International Resource Panel also published a collection of factsheets on “[Natural Resource Use in the Group of 20](#)”. It shows the increase in natural resource

use and the consequences for environmental destruction, greenhouse gases and climate change and biodiversity loss.

To “build back better” means to make smart use of natural resources, which is the key message from the International Resource Panel. A new paradigm of resource use is needed, regarding our way of life, mobility, construction and the generation of wealth, to build a new relationship between humankind and nature. This challenge cannot be solved by a small group or on a regional level but has to be approached globally. Climate change and the health crisis are pressuring for answers regarding inclusive and green development and social inequalities around the world. This requires ambition to act and to improve international cooperation, despite the surge of protectionist and unilateralist tendencies.

The global transition to a zero-carbon economy is not going backwards. Even if there is still a long way to go, there is hope with the election of Mr Biden and China’s decision to hit their peak emissions before 2030. The world is changing and the future will be shaped, not by hard, but by soft power. Circular economies are part of the expression of soft power of all countries, allowing for new ways to be part of the world. They also offer emerging developing economies opportunities to come together, joining the global movement, where a circular economy will influence consumption and production. All are co-responsible for the decisions taken by different societies and governments. The pandemic exerts immense pressure on the world, but at the same time offers the opportunity to change.

The International Resource Panel, published in the “[Global Resource Outlook](#)”, showing the importance of the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement, which can only be achieved by combining circular approaches with the current efforts in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Circularity requires creativity and cooperation among all value chain actors, involving governments, communities and the private sector.

Latin America and the Caribbean:

The case of Brazil

The strategies that are being developed for economic sectors have to be based on concrete realities, taking into account local needs and national and global benefits. Latin American countries, like Brazil, need solutions aligned with job generation and social inequalities. Not just the elite can manage the transition, but the people have to be part of the solution. For Latin America, this means to find solutions for the Amazon and Plata River basin and to connect the circular economy to business, agriculture, cities, and infrastructure.

An Amazon Alliance, that includes all the Amazonian countries, could be established, in order to jointly implement a green recovery strategy for the region. 25 million people

live in the Brazilian Amazon, of which 8 % live in cities, meaning that both the forest ecosystem and the urban ecosystem need to be discussed. In this context, circularity and bioeconomy can provide solutions, providing answers to deforestation and also strategies towards sustainable development.

United Nations Environment Programme, Brazil

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) overview work on circularity highlights the importance of strategy shaping and advocacy, as well as knowledge development and technical support, to maintain the [UNEP circularity platform](#), centralising resources and nurturing a community of practice on building circularity across and within UNEP. Furthermore, there are currently several sectoral projects, among them some on plastics, textiles, electronics and mining. Lastly, stakeholder engagement is of fundamental importance. There is a great variety of recommendable publications, among them "[The weight of Cities](#)", which was published a few months ago by the International Resource Panel, as well as "[Growing in Circles](#)", related to climate and cities, "[National Guidance for Plastic Pollution Hotspotting and Shaping Action](#)" and "[A 1.5°C World Requires a Circular and Low Carbon Economy](#)", as well as UNEP's regional case studies.

In Brazil, UNEP is working on circularity with the "Clean Seas Campaign", which has been in place for about four years and that was designed to tackle plastics. It specifically targets plastic in tourism, in order to create plastic-free touristic cities. The latest edition of the "Clean Seas Campaign" is going to be associated with the research by the University of Brasilia (UnB) on the perception of the tourist sector regarding single-use plastics. The Program is going to further the study and to increase the campaign reach, talking to specific states and municipalities after the elections. The goal is to assess where they can make a change and to implement a public policy approach with the newly elected mayors.

UNEP also addresses plastic-free food delivery, which is increasingly important in times of confinement. They work with iFood, Ubereats and other food delivery systems, trying to find new business opportunities for reusable containers. The Program is a partner of PAGE "[partnership for green economy](#)" with the state of Mato Grosso, working intensely with UNIDO, UNDP and ILO over the course of the last four years.

	<p align="center">EU-LAC WEBINAR CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE COVID-19 ERA: "CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES" Tuesday, 24 November 2020, 15.00 - 17.00 CET</p>		
<p align="center">Welcome Address</p>	<p align="center">1st Panel : Circular Economy and Global Outreach</p>	<p align="center">2nd Panel: National Circular Pathways</p>	<p align="center">3rd Panel: Multilateral Platforms</p>
<p> Stanislav Raščan State Secretary, MFA Republic of Slovenia</p> <p> Adrián Bonilla Executive Director, EU-LAC Foundation</p> <p> Ernesto Jeger <i>Moderator</i> Programme manager, EU-LAC Foundation</p>	<p> Marjeta Jager Deputy Director General, DG DEVCO, European Commission</p> <p> Ladeja Godina Košir Chair Coordination Group, European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) & Executive Director, Circular Change Institute for Circular Economy</p>	<p> Janja Kreitmayer McKenzie Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia</p> <p> Linnet Solway Director Circular Economy, EuroChile</p> <p> Beatriz Luz Founder, Exchange4Change Brasil (E4CB)</p> <p> Fernando Brites Founder, Kora Paraguay</p>	<p> Izabella Teixeira Co-Chair International Resources Panel, Former Minister for Environment, Brazil</p> <p> Denise Hamu UNEP Brazil Representative</p>
<p align="center">Registration: bit.ly/2ISAEAA The Webinar will be held in English without translation</p>			

For the recording of the webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcn7eY3lvBU>

4. EU-LAC WEBINAR:

'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.

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-Sklódowska-Curie and Horizon 2020) and Rita Lecbychova (Directorate General for Research and Innovation and International Cooperation, European Commission).

The aim of the seminar was to address the future of Latin America and its possibilities in the Horizon Europe programme, the programme that replaces Horizon 2020. This is a large-scale project of the European Union whose purpose is to support, finance and strengthen research and innovation in the Union, by understanding the idea of knowledge, innovation, and research as a global phenomenon, so that other regions could participate. In this sense, in the same way that the predecessor project involved proposals coming from Latin America and the Caribbean and which were associated with European counterparts, the new Horizon Europe project will open this possibility.

The seminar was part of the EU-LAC Foundation's policy of strengthening the capacities of its member states to be able to apply more effectively to the possibilities of co-financing European Union projects with Latin American and Caribbean counterparts. This seminar was a service that the EU-LAC Foundation, as an international intergovernmental organisation, composed of the countries of the European Union, Latin America and the

Caribbean, offers to its member countries to increase their knowledge of cooperation opportunities.

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.

Initiatives that foster bi-regional cooperation

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.

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 “1st 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.

EU-CELAC: JIRI-SOM

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. 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. 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.

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 were discussed at the political level at the European Union-Latin America and Caribbean ministerial meeting held in Berlin on December 14, 2020, where the green and digital issues were also addressed.

Currently, consultation and bi-regional cooperation in science, technology and innovation is essential. For this reason, it is important to highlight the achievements of the relaunch of the joint CELAC-European Union initiative on research and innovation (JIRI). 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.

The new Horizon Europe Programme

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 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.

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).

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.

The European Green Deal Call

Approaching the end of the Horizon 2020 programme, the European Commission has recently published its largest call in the programme, the European Green Deal, 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.

Challenges and opportunities

Democratise access to information and raise awareness of programmes and initiatives

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.

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. Looking at data of participations, 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 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.

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.

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, in addition to informing that the programme is open, to accompany the process and empower countries in the knowledge of their own research capacity and research and innovation structure.

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, above all, the prioritisation

of identified issues is difficult and it is necessary to strengthen common policies in CELAC, without losing the particularities.

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 these actions, 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 NCP has a technical role in disseminating and promoting calls for proposals and application mechanisms.

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.

Incorporate international cooperation mechanism in a more inclusive way

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Specific procedure to enter the programme

To join the Horizon 2020 programme and the future Horizon Europe, the European Commission portal “Funding and Tenders” 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 programme.

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.

To conclude, although the Horizon Europe programme has only recently been implemented, 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.



For the recording of the webinar: <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/eu-lac-webinar-0>

5. WEBINAR EU-LAC FOUNDATION AND INTERNATIONAL IDEA: 'STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND EUROPE: ANALYSIS AND PERSPECTIVES IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC'

The webinar 'State of Democracy in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe: Analysis and Perspectives in Times of Pandemic and Post-Pandemic' was organised by the EU-LAC Foundation and International Idea within the framework of the signing of a cooperation agreement between both entities, carried out on December 11, 2020. The [recording](#) is available on the website of the [EU-LAC Foundation](#).

The objective of this webinar was to provide a space for a group of experts to share reflections on the challenges of democracy in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, to address the complexities posed by the pandemic and the opportunities that open up for the continuous strengthening of the democratic value in both regions. The format of the event consisted of 8- minute presentations from each speaker, followed by a series of questions from the audience.

The panel was made up of Dr Adrián Bonilla (Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation), Dr Sergio Bitar (Former Minister of State of Chile and Vice President of the Board of International Idea), Dr Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida (Senior Lecturer at the University of São Paulo and Senior Researcher at the Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning - CEBRAP), Dr Claudia Zilla (Principal Researcher of the Americas Research Department at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs) and Dr Felipe Burbano de Lara (Director of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences-FLACSO Ecuador). The seminar was moderated by Dr Daniel Zovatto, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at International Idea.

State of Democracy in the EU and LAC in times of pandemic

The European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) share the democratic value given that both organisations have always raised the idea of defending democracy, both in international documents and in their political statements. In Latin America, particularly, CELAC has defined democracy with a relatively procedural logic. It is defined as a political process that: a) respects

the essential values of this type of regime; b) states that access to power and its exercise are subject to law; c) raises respect for the constitutional capacities of different State powers; d) proposes holding free, transparent and informed elections under universal suffrage as an expression of sovereignty; and e) raises the respect of all public freedoms including human rights as a basis for this principle. Around this conception of the desirable political reality, both regions have developed partnership strategies.

4 out of 10 democracies in the world show setbacks due to health measures taken in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The degrees of deterioration have increased, new and complex threats have appeared, and there is a greater degree of dissatisfaction with democracy; in some cases, it has been eroding, in others its hybrid features have deepened, and in others the authoritarian characteristics of these regimes have deepened.

Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: progress and balance sheet

With the 'third wave of democratisation' there have been diverse regional responses in the world. While democracy has taken hold in southern Europe and is disappearing in Russia, Latin American and Caribbean democracies face the challenge of strengthening their democratic institutions in societies in which there are numerous inequalities alongside poverty.

Guaranteeing the integrity of electoral processes is essential to strengthen democratic institutions. Latin American democracies are advancing as elections are allowing the system to sustain itself. In addition, special emphasis should be placed on governmental capacity to allow democracy to take hold on the continent. The major challenge is the ability of the region's political systems to institutionally channel protest and unrest, which are permanently present in the respective societies. Chile is an example of how a political system can be opened and reformed based on the demands of society. This ability of democratic systems to open and respond to pressure will be crucial for democracy to remain the prevalent system in the region.

One of the points that has advanced the most in the democratic period is the idea of rights. Movements have been built and have advanced because the democratic system advanced the idea of equality, women's movements and movements of Afro-descendant and indigenous communities. Social movements can contribute to an innovative bottom-up social pact, it should be specified that a social pact is a gradual process that has to be characterised by an ascending political line, through actions that promote discussion and state-induced dialogue with citizens. The resources for this purpose should be in proportion to the reduction of inequality and the creation of a basis for democracy and that a social pact means, above all, reviewing the poverty reduction policy.

Chile is an example of how a political system can be opened up and reformed based on the demands of society. This ability of democratic systems to open up and respond to pressure will be fundamental for democracy to remain the predominant system in the region. Reference to the Chilean case can exemplify how the political agreement to create a plebiscite to open a new constitution is an institutional opening to channel social protests, issues of inequality, and discrimination.

Challenges for democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean

To compare current populism with that of the past, it should be first be mentioned that populism is a somewhat imprecise term since it has been used to describe very different processes. In the past, leaders that enabled important sectors of the population to be included in political life have been called populists. What exists now are political processes and phenomena that are no longer on the subject of real inclusion, but sectors excluded from political life, which use uncertainty in the face of differences, and in a way encourage polarisation. If populism already had a difficult approval of democracy in the past, now it is basically a factor of tension and deepening polarisation.

Furthermore, there is a „vicious triangle in the democracies of Latin America and the Caribbean“. In other words, three disruptive points for the functioning of democracy in the region: 1) poverty and inequality; 2) violence and corruption; 3) institutional transgression.

Data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) can be used to explain the first disruptive point, stating that with 8.2% of the world's population at the end of September 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean concentrated 28% of cases of infection and 34% of deaths related to COVID-19, this being a consequence of the poverty and inequality of the subcontinent. More than a third of the region's population lives under the poverty line, and within this third, a third survives in conditions of extreme poverty. In turn, Latin America and the Caribbean is the most unequal region in the world. According to data from the World Bank, 8 of the 10 most unequal countries in the world are in the region; in it 20% of the population concentrates 83% of the wealth. These levels of poverty and inequality restrict the exercise of rights and freedoms, make the political sphere permeable to economic logic, and undermine social cohesion to the extent that society becomes compartmentalised into parallel worlds according to social strata.

Regarding the second point of the vicious triangle, can be mentioned that although Latin America and the Caribbean form a zone free of nuclear weapons and without interstate conflicts, it is the most violent region in the world. This is due not only to the presence of criminal gangs and paramilitary groups, but also the involvement of state security agents in what makes up a large part of the computed homicides. Violence is combined with poverty and inequality, affecting the most vulnerable social groups: women, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, homosexuals, queers and trans. In addition to this problem of violence, there is corruption, which promotes the

discrediting of politics. In her words, corruption is such a structural problem that it is not only a political issue but also a cultural one that touches all individuals in society.

The third and last vertex of the vicious triangle, refers to institutional transgression, giving as examples the presidential re-electionism, the judicialisation of politics and the politicisation of justice. The researcher explained that the corruption scandals and their judicial prosecution have ambivalent effects since they generate a distortion of political competition, where the expectation of criminal prosecution increases the incentive to perpetuate themselves in public office and political mandates, guaranteeing a certain immunity from possible lawsuits.

Moreover, the Latin American and Caribbean region faces five challenges in restoring the quality of democracy and enable it to build political horizons:

1. Re-establish the link between political elites and society.
2. Re-establish the link between political elites and voters in order to avoid the volatility of political processes and the de-legitimisation of the governments of the elected presidents. Ensuring the quality of political processes is a minimum condition for democracies to renew and re-legitimise themselves.
3. Overcome the fracture between the political elites themselves: overcoming ideological polarisations is relevant to re-granting governmental capacity to democratic regimes.
4. Overcome the breakdown of political elites associated with existing democratic institutions and social and popular movements that cause radical popular effervescence in many Latin American countries and propose different forms of democratic change and renewal.
5. Re-think the economic model so that the model can retake growth, ensure redistribution and face the new challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The problem of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean today is linked to the democratic capacity to incorporate the emancipatory demands of the various social actors and popular movements. The challenge is how to restore a libertarian sense to democracy, give political form to the demands, and connect democracy with the emancipatory ideal.

Finally, democracy is a global problem and, when referring to Latin America, it is important to highlight the importance of taking into account that it is an extremely diverse region in which several political systems coexist that call themselves democratic and where part of the political debate revolves around how to name those practices and institutions.

Dissatisfaction with democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is widespread discontent with democracy and the revolts against political parties and elites. Consequently, it is a crisis of the forms of social representation associated with the institutions of democracy in its liberal or polyarchic form.

The historical uniqueness of the region is due to two instances. On the one hand, the progressive dissolution of the democratic notion linked to the transitions of the 80s concentrated on building a democratic regime (set of parties, institutions, freedoms, rules that substituted previous forms of authoritarianism). The transitions that generated enormous expectations and even a re-founding moment for democracies were an imaginary concept that slowly diluted and already in the mid-1990s the sociological and political literature showed the difficulties of transitions to the consolidation of democracies (absence of citizenships and guarantee of citizen rights, amongst others). This first diagnosis has shown the difficulty of the coexistence of the transition regimes with neoliberal policies.

On the other hand, the left turn in Latin America since the late 1990s was the other event that marked history. This turning point is a process that opens the search for alternative forms to liberal democracy (participatory, civic, radical, re-founding) that altogether focussed on the criticism of representative liberal democracies. There was then a left turn not only in democratic terms but also in post-neoliberal economic models tied to ideals of the 21st century socialism.

Opportunities of the COVID-19 crisis for Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union

Exist 5 great opportunities that the crisis presents for Latin American States:

1. Necessity for change of the political system: Reduce polarisation and seek basic consensus to maintain democracy, paying attention to electoral systems as well as strengthening the autonomy of the judiciary, and reducing the decoupling between the elite and the citizenry through a reinforcement of dialogue and deliberation.
2. Creation of a new social pact: The central issue is the reform of the health system such as the proposal to create a global body for the prevention and coordination of pandemics, within the framework of the World Health Organization (WHO).
3. Change in the productive structure: This implies advances in terms of digitisation, forms of education, training and reduction of informal employment.
4. Governance: The leadership of many female leaders has been decisive, and the participation of young people has been innovative.
5. Rearrangement of the global order: The global institutional framework must support democracy.

Europe has a more affirmative position of its own strategy regarding democracy, since it is about the so-called “European Strategic Autonomy”. Although Europe is showing a more pronounced interest in Asia, it is possible to distinguish 5 topics that could lead to rethinking and generating dynamics between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean:

1. Values, social democracy and human rights
2. Strategic autonomy
3. Social pact
4. Climate change
5. Digitalisation

Finally, it is important to think about what actions Latin America and the Caribbean can carry out together with Europe, region that supports and has solved extremely complex problems and is a beacon of democracy and values. It is the social participation, the social pact and a State administration of quality that allows for a better government. Another significant aspect is how to build a political regime that accounts for systems of representation of the societies’ interests and how to build channels for the participation of all its actors in decision-making and resource allocation systems.

	<p>Webinario EU-LAC</p> <p>Estado de la Democracia en América Latina: Análisis y Perspectivas en Épocas de Pandemia y Post Pandemia</p> <p>Jueves, 10 de diciembre 2020, 16.00h CET</p>	
<p>Palabras de bienvenida</p>	<p>Panelistas</p>	
 <p>Adrián Bonilla Director Ejecutivo, Fundación EU-LAC</p>	 <p>Sergio Bitar Presidente, Consejo Chileno de Prospectiva y Estrategia</p>	 <p>Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida Profesora USP, Investigadora Senior de CEBRAP</p>
 <p>Daniel Zovatto Moderador Director para América Latina y el Caribe, IDEA Internacional</p>	 <p>Claudia Zilla Senior Fellow, División Las Américas, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik</p>	 <p>Felipe Burbano de Lara Director, FLACSO Ecuador</p>
<p>Inscripciones en bit.ly/33IJa09</p>		

For the recording of the webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxIIiw0RiSQ>

6. EU-LAC WEBINAR:

“CULTURAL POLICIES IN TIMES OF DIGITISATION: EXPERIENCES FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”

The webinar ‘Cultural Policies in Times of Digitisation: Experiences from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean’ was organised by the EU-LAC Foundation on 04 May 2021, in the framework of the ‘Europe Week 2021 in Hamburg’ (*Europa Woche*), an initiative of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. The [recording](#) of the webinar is available on the website of the [EU-LAC Foundation](#).

The objective of the webinar was, in the first instance, to provide a space for dialogue between decision-makers in the field of cultural policy and a group of representatives of cultural management organisations from both regions. The event aimed to generate an exchange of challenges, opportunities and promising initiatives at the level of cultural policies, accompanied by a balance of similarities and differences in terms of digitisation and its implications for cultural policies. To this end, it sought to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the digitisation of cultural policies, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to provide a space for the presentation of best practices in digitisation from both regions.

The format of the event consisted of an opening segment and three thematic sections (1. Similarities and differences, 2. Opportunities and challenges, 3. Best practices) with presentations of about 10 minutes from each panellist. A series of questions from the audience were answered by the experts in the Q&A section during the course of the event.

Relevance of digitisation in the cultural sector - (bi)regional and local approaches

The EU-LAC Foundation inaugurated this webinar by framing it within its objectives as an international organisation, which are to build on the strengthening of the bi-regional partnership process between the countries of the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between societies. the theme of the seminar – cultural policies in times of digitalisation – is of great importance because is not only part of the common agenda of the EU and LAC, but that the last year of the pandemic has shown the

profound change of the digital era and the transfer of the way of life and interaction between people in a space of use of digital instruments. In this context, issues of access to cultural tools and goods, of participation, as well as other challenges in the whole value chain of the creative and cultural sector are raised for all countries.

The relevance of the event from the perspective of the EU-LAC Foundation was to encourage participants to reflect on experiences and viable alternatives in this area, to identify opportunities, challenges and best practices, and to systematise possible instruments and policies to explore how the areas of digitisation can be democratised at a global level and to boost, accelerate and strengthen the bi-regional relationship.

The Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC also framed the importance of the theme of the webinar in the context of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural industry while reiterating the value of culture for humanity. In this new stage of cultural cooperation between EU and LAC societies, it attributed a fundamental role to the bi-regional CELAC-EU partnership. It expressed its pleasure on the participation of important cultural organisations from both regions, as well as the European Commission and other important actors from different academic and civil society spheres in the seminar, as these alliances allow to enhance the work of the EU-LAC Foundation, providing added value to strengthen bi-regional links and the multilateral work of both regions.

From the perspective of the European Union, it was highlighted that the new reality and normality since last year are virtual meetings, as in the case of this webinar, and that this fact shows the ability of the human being to adapt quickly to new circumstances. In this context, the question arises of distance in a digitalised world and, particularly in the cultural area, and of who makes up the audience these days. Given the inequalities in benefiting from the impact of digital on society, the key priority for both cultural policy and digitisation must be the empowerment of all citizens.

The European Commission's new vision and proposals for digital transformation until 2030, called "Shaping Europe's Digital Future", which aims to empower European society with digital solutions that are rooted in common values and help Europe pursue its own path towards a digital transformation that benefits all citizens, creates a fair and competitive economy and contributes to an open, democratic and sustainable society. Another important aspect for the European Commission is the cultural heritage that has been revitalised through new digital technologies and the internet.

In the context of the pandemic, the confinement and closure of cultural institutions reveals the relevance of cultural space both on a personal and societal level. However, the COVID-19 crisis brings with it rapid changes, the most visible among them being the progress in digitisation. From Hamburg's perspective, digital formats are becoming more and more widespread, practiced and accepted and open up the cultural space for an audience beyond the local one which would not be possible without digitisation.

In this respect, were mentioned a few examples from Hamburg: The art museum Hamburger Kunsthalle shows an exhibition combining digital tools with cooperation with local theatres and the avant-garde orchestra which shows how the pandemic opens the space for interdisciplinary cooperation that would otherwise not be realised.

Another example is the “Digital Benin” project of the Hamburg Museum of Ethnology. Emphasis was placed on the advantage of digitisation in fostering interdisciplinary work, in addition to its potential to democratise people’s access to culture, to ensure the representation of vulnerable groups and minorities in the cultural sphere, as well as its potential to promote diversity in culture. In conclusion, it indicated that digitisation in cultural policies can help strengthen bi-regional cooperation between the EU and LAC as this webinar did.

The pandemic showed that it is necessary to change the way people live and that digital technologies, on the one hand, offer opportunities such as the distribution of culture on a global level and, on the other hand, reveal challenges and difficulties with regard to the impact of the pandemic on value chains and accessibility. There are important differences between EU and LAC countries and regions in terms of digitisation: In 2020, internet penetration was 89% in the EU while in LAC it was only 73%, showing that access to digital tools is not equal in both regions.

However, a remarkable progress was achieved particularly in terms of mobile connectivity in many places. One of the most important things for decision-makers is to focus on providing adequate internet access to absolutely everyone.

Similarities and Differences between the two regions

The theme of the seminar is a current one, on the one hand, because of the COVID-19 crisis that has exponentially accelerated the use of digital technologies in the cultural sector¹ and, on the other hand, because of the European Union’s ambitious agenda to create a human-centred digital world (i.e. its programme Digital Europe) around principles such as human rights, sustainability and prosperity. In the UNESCO Culture and Public Policy Newsletter (Tracker) to monitor public policy with regard to the UN sustainable development agenda and the whole post-COVID-19 recovery, they noted that cultural digitisation acts as a democratisation tool.

The emergence of new opportunities for online cultural goods and services, both in terms of access and new forms of creativity, and the interactivity of this content demonstrated new opportunities for cultural participation as the lines between artists, cultural institutions and their audience were blurred, resulting in culture being appropriated by all. Finally, it has demonstrated the importance of recognising culture

1 See the report “Museums in the face of COVID-19”. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373530/PDF/373530eng.pdf.multi>

not only as a public good, but also as an essential good that strengthens the resilience of peoples in a phase of adversity.

However, UNESCO also noted that the increase in the exchange of cultural content online has widened access and diversity gaps. For this organisation, it was striking that nearly 80 per cent of all websites are accessed in only 10 of the world's 7,000 living languages.² The great disparity in digital access and infrastructure threatens to exclude many from the benefits of the digitisation of culture, the divide being not only a matter of geography but also of gender. Thus, only 19% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa has access to the Internet while a large part of the population lives in rural areas. With regard to gender, women have less access to digital skills, jobs and networks, which jeopardises the under-representation of women's online activities.

Another problem concerns the remuneration and authors' rights that can end up deepening inequalities in access to and participation in culture and, on a larger scale, limiting cultural diversity.³ Considering cultural democratisation on the one hand and cultural deprivation on the other, the accelerated use of digital technologies driven by the COVID-19 crisis is illuminating two important aspects of the state of culture in today's world: a) the power of culture and its essential role for personal and social development, and b) the politics and fragility prevailing in the global cultural ecosystem; two aspects covered by UNESCO's EU co-funded programme [Transcultural: Integrating Cuba, The Caribbean And The European Union Through Culture And Creativity](#).

Some recommendations for digitisation to become a driver of positive change to fully unlock the potential of culture would be, for example:

1. Monitoring: There is a need to analyse what works and what does not in order to inform the policy debate to make the cultural sector more resilient and cultural services more inclusive and sustainable.
2. Investment: First in terms of political will and funding in the development of cultural policies that address key aspects and challenges related to digitisation.
3. Investment in skills development: This is essential to close the gender gap and make the digital transformation a force for inclusion.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The following analysis is based data collected in the last year by institutions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the

2 Data extracted from the UNESCO Culture and Public Policy Newsletter, Tracker 2. <https://en.unesco.org/news/tracker-culture-public-policy-issue-2>

3 See 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370521_spa/PDF/370521spa.pdf.multi.page=28 and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention in the Digital Environment, https://fr.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/digital_guidelines_es_full-2.pdf.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNESCO, the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) and other multinational organisations, including the Evaluation of the impact of COVID-19 on cultural and creative industries: a joint initiative of MERCOSUR, UNESCO, IDB, SEGIB and OEI in 2020, which analyses data and policies in 11 MERCOSUR-related countries⁴.

This evaluation reveals that, despite significant progress in broadband coverage in LAC and the large percentage of people who have mobile telephony, the majority of the population is far from having the tools, knowledge and opportunities to make use of digitisation as an engine to improve their living conditions. Despite the fact that practically all urban areas in LAC have mobile broadband coverage and just over 84% have a mobile phone, only 69% of people report using the internet.

For remote work or studies, the main determinant is whether households have access to a fixed broadband service, which reveals profound inequalities: in Chile and Costa Rica more than 85% of households have internet, while in countries such as Bolivia and Guatemala it is less than 25%. With respect to the availability of computers in households, the gap is even wider, ranging from 68% of households owning one in Uruguay to 11% in Haiti. Within countries, inequalities are very marked by the urban-rural dimension, as shown, for example, in Brazil in 2017 when adoption was 65% in urban areas and 33.6% in rural areas.

In addition, the use of the internet is relevant: for the most part, it is used only for basic communication on social networks. CAF's Household Digital Resilience Index shows that the pandemic accelerated and deepened historical and pre-existing difficulties such as informality, labour vulnerability, difficulties in protecting copyrights, the growing digital divide, as well as economic and geographic concentration. It also generated new forms of inequality and inequity, such as the accelerated reconversion of activities, the lack of incentives, training and tools that accompany the transformation of the labour market and that transfer to the digital sphere the inequalities of the face-to-face world.

The study of the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries also shows that digitisation, in the context of the pandemic, succeeded and developed faster than before. The migration of artists and people working in creative and cultural industries to virtuality led to a re-engineering of audience development, communication with audiences through social networks and the creation of new audiences. However, the vast majority of artists and creators did not engage in virtual activities to generate economic benefits, but to stay connected with their audience and/or to contribute culture in times of social isolation and sadness.

At present, on the one hand, culture is firmly established in public policy, occupying a central place and a value that it did not have until now. On the other hand, some sectors dispute and resist investment in culture, arguing that these investments take

⁴ This report was scheduled to be published by the end of May 2021.

priority and resources away from the areas of direct attention to the health emergency. The consequences are budget cuts, underfunding of public cultural infrastructures and facilities, and lack of social security coverage for those engaged in this activity.

The rapid emergence of new forms of creativity and the growth of the digital cultural sector is facing a situation of extreme multitasking that overburdens employers and demands skills and knowledge that they have not necessarily acquired in their education. Furthermore, with regard to public-private cooperation, one urgent and fundamental necessity is the allocation of more resources, but another important one is the planning of new synergies between the state, the artistic community, workers and the business sector to generate more stable jobs, higher profits and new activities.

Now it is a propitious moment to innovate in culture and to promote deep and lasting transformations to prevent the social and economic gap from deepening significantly if measures of protection and inclusion are not taken for people working in the cultural sector.

The preservation of digital cultural production and the risk of losing a large part of the content because it is not archived in a good way, is a challenge that must be addressed by the creation of associative and collaborative platforms, and that it is important to analyse to what extent digitisation can be advanced and in which sectors. However, it should be also stressed that the digital will not replace the in- person, which offers a broader and more personal experience with art.

Challenges

Among the numerous challenges figure, for example, the adaptation processes for the cultural industry, challenges for institutions and professionals in the field of cultural heritage, new skills and infrastructure needs, and new forms of digital consumption of cultural production that have led to changes in value chains with the emergence and consolidation of dominant internet-based players.

During the pandemic, the move towards digitisation generated problems for some people. For example, the question of remuneration arose in the case of online content that was often free and used by a large audience.

Latin America and the Caribbean

No cultural sector has remained unaffected by the pandemic and that some of the changes of this era will surely be irreversible. This situation has exposed the major shortcomings of the past, especially the lack of a digital strategy in many regions of the world.

In 2017, were conducted interviews with actors from the cultural, public and NGO sectors in five Spanish-speaking countries (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Mexico) as part of the report "[Culture in the digital environment](#)" for UNESCO to assess how technologies are influencing artists, cultural industries and audiences and to try to identify the main challenges and opportunities they face in this new environment. These interviews showed that there were very interesting phenomena in the private and public sector but that these were generally isolated initiatives without a long-term national or regional Latin American vision of a digital culture. It was at this point that the crisis hit the sector and the only actors who could continue to operate when the quarantine began were those who had consolidated their digital presence before.

It is necessary to work in two directions at the moment: On the one hand, in the short term, it is necessary to support more traditional actors who are more affected, especially to ensure that entire cultural fabrics do not disappear. On the other hand, in the long term and throughout the region, it is necessary to develop a digital culture strategy that is comprehensive and sustainable, taking into account current challenges and opportunities.

Main challenges:

- a. A good part of LAC does not have access to the internet: This gap slows down any type of activity, from consumption and creation to the deployment of cultural industries in the digital environment;
- b. Huge connectivity disparities between capital cities and the rest of the territory;
- c. Lack of skills: There is an urgent need for different cultural actors everywhere in the value chain to access broader training in terms of digital know-how.

On the other hand, many artists and cultural entrepreneurs will face difficulties in reinventing themselves because we are in a Fourth Industrial Revolution that is characterised, among others, by the automation of all life (artificial intelligence, robotisation, internet) and that has great creative potential. The problem will be that the benefits of this creative explosion will certainly not be distributed equally on a global scale and on a country-by-country scale. This may lead to massive job losses in the cultural sector, and large platforms may occupy even larger portions of the market, which may result in irreversible economic concentration.

Both regions present challenges of digitisation in the cultural sector, such as the risk of widening geographical, social and economic gaps through highly differentiated access to media and technological knowledge, as well as the gender gap in terms of access to and use of new technologies. Furthermore, exist the risk of losing diversity considering that a very high percentage of digital content is created in a very small number of languages, as well as the problem of alterations in the mode of production of art and culture that impact on value chains with important questions about remuneration in the cultural sector.

The last months of the pandemic offered a space to rethink this value proposition of culture. While for a large proportion of people digital events and content served for entertainment since there were no other events due to the confinement, 40% of people in rural areas of the EU still do not have access to broadband connections.

Bringing this conversation back in terms of how to update the regulatory framework, it should be noted that cultural policy itself can be this regulatory framework. The problem with cultural policy is that it tends to be late because it is not as agile as industry itself. From a sectoral point of view, there are specific measures that really address the needs of a particular sub-sector, such as libraries, heritage, etc. However, the policy also sees digitisation as a process to support participation, for example in terms of active ageing, creative support for people with learning disabilities or improving access through artificial intelligence.

Among the challenges related to cultural policies and digitisation, it stands out that the monetisation of this hybrid format shift is still relatively poor and very difficult to access and engage. A cultural policy probably cannot solve this problem as a single member state, but requires collectivity from a regional and international point of view. Secondly, there is the problem of how the artist can also be enabled and supported to not only adapt, but be able to participate and change in this conversation. Finally, it is important not to think of digitalisation as a replacement of something, but rather as the creation of something new through the crossover of innovations and technologies, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality. A cultural policy cannot achieve this alone and this is where a lot more crossover between economy, technology and innovation is required.

Opportunities

Digitisation brings not only challenges, but also opportunities, for example, in terms of artists and their work reaching new audiences and publics, or making cultural heritage more accessible and preserving it for future generations. At the same time, the pandemic offered the opportunity for the same to maintain contact with their audience. Furthermore, this reinforced the contribution of the cultural sector to health, particularly mental health and wellbeing.

Particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, one opportunity is that, addressing the gaps and empowering the creators of local cultural industries could lead to a broader, more dynamic and thriving cultural ecosystem. Moreover, the successful application of digital technologies could contribute to democratising access and creativity, as well as harnessing the power of a market of more than 600 million people and thus overcoming the traditional obstacles in LAC to becoming a uniform cultural market, such as geographical distances, regulatory differences between countries, and the lack of basic cultural infrastructure within countries.

European Union strategies

The support of culture and creation in the digital context is a high priority in EU policies and that the process of development in the cultural sector had already started before the pandemic but was accelerated through the crisis. EU policies aim to maximise these opportunities while addressing the challenges, providing an ecosystem whereby artists and cultural professionals and European productions can thrive.

Another important aspect is the strengthening of digital skills. The EU has various programmes for the cultural sector to address challenges and opportunities. It was mentioned, for example, the “Creative Europe” programme, which has a strong focus on the digital dimension and aims to facilitate learning among cultural and creative operators on how to better benefit from the advantages of the digital environment. Another example was the “Music Moves Europe” initiative which aims at promoting diversity and competitiveness in the sector. In this context, the possibility to explore the diversity of European music and its cross-border circulation turned out to be important issues related to digitisation.

Policy cooperation is another pillar: the EU is a supranational organisation and has a supportive and complementary role to the policies and actions of the Member States. It seeks to promote cooperation through “the Open Method of Coordination”, which brings together government experts working on a voluntary basis to discuss topical issues for culture and share experiences and practices that can be useful across the Union and beyond. Another important aspect is regulatory intervention to create a sustainable and forward-looking regulatory environment that enables and supports European creativity and access to culture. Some of the legislative reforms for the creative and cultural sector in the EU were made in the framework of the core project to create a European single market also for the digital world, including the modernisation of the European copyright rules and the European audiovisual regulatory framework.

The aforementioned should empower the creative sector to decide on and better negotiate remuneration for the use of their works on digital platforms, as well as benefit individual creators through greater transparency and balanced relationships with their contractual partners. For audiovisual media services, the updated legislation further supports the promotion and visibility of European culture in its diversity in a digital context. These and other reforms ensure a fair online environment for the creative sectors and promote a level playing field which is crucial to strengthen European content and support the EU’s core and common values of cultural diversity and media pluralism in the digital context.

Furthermore, the new action plan “Europe’s Media in the Digital Decade” which includes several measures to support recovery, transformation and innovation. Among these measures is, for example, a spending for the digital sector of 20% of the total post-COVID-19 recovery expenditure. Other measures aim to harness data and the

potential of new immersive technologies and empower European societies by increasing access to content to strengthen media literacy and other important skills-related issues.

Best Practices

European Union

The EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) is a network of co-creation, i.e. it tries to bring the European dimension to cultural relations that traditionally fall within the competence of the EU member states, whereby each country has its own organisation. EUNIC works together with organisations, cultural professionals and artists all over the world and focuses primarily on people- to-people exchanges, building trust and mutual understanding. Because of the pandemic, the activities were moved to the digital dimension and a time of experimentation began.

There was definitely a shift in thinking about the nature of their work and whether mobility, as it was known, can and should continue to take into account also the sustainable development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, impact on the environment, as well as equity in the wider world. Questions also arose as to which formats could be implemented in digitalized ways, under which conditions it could be beneficial to work with the Internet, and in which fields should one go back to physical connections, or in which cases a hybrid format could be used?

One of EUNIC's current initiatives is "European Spaces of Culture" in which test new forms of European collaboration with partners on the ground were tested. A project under the name "[Triángulo Teatro](#)"⁵ that is currently highlighting this initiative and finding a new model for this is implemented in Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala). Initially, the plan was to undertake capacity building workshops in the theatre sector connecting the professional scenes of the three countries. As this was not possible because of the pandemic, they are currently testing new digital formats, such as capacity building workshops, workshops on internationalisation of these cultural venues, and they are planning a platform for virtual presentations of co-created theatre performances.

An additional project in Cuba "[CLIC - Culture to Connect](#)" aims to bridge the gap between Europe and Cuba, boosting Cuban cultural industries and artists through exchange, capacity building, co-creation activities and stimulating innovative and resilient urbanism in Havana. There is a strong local ownership of the project, which is important for EUNIC, and is a kind of technological connection to the arts. Additionally, some fashion and furniture brands from Cuba have created an online collection called "[Global Warming](#)" that focuses on sustainable development and the immersive experience. This collective created a virtual online platform with a series of virtual

⁵ An example of the work of "Triángulo Teatro" is the "Dionysus Project". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=pFsiCA8xxCM&pli=1>

talks with European designers and a live show under the category of immersive experience that brings together augmented reality, virtual reality and 360o video.

Another project is called “[Flash Act](#)” and takes place in Mexico. This project connects art, science and technology to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the difficulty of reaching communities through digital media, these three projects also reach the public through radio when Internet access is limited in these countries.

In Malta, there is a need to reflect on how the conversation on cultural policy can be changed or adapted from a pre-pandemic reality to a post-pandemic reality. Also, whether Malta’s national policy really goes back to the roots of cultural policy, which are cultural rights (right to create, right to engage, right to participate). In this country, digitisation is understood as a tool as much as culture itself and reflects on how this will change the narrative and value proposition of culture.

What makes digital cultural policies adapt to the digitisation of society are the following aspects: accessibility, diversity, inclusion, gender and sustainability. An example of EU projects that show ways to embrace these aspects by experimenting with digitization is the project “[Artsformation](#)” which is a research project in the framework of “Horizon 2020” and tries, in a creative way, to understand and analyse the ways whereby art can reinforce the social, cultural, economic and political benefits of the digital transformation. It focuses on analysing the role of art in digital societies, as well as understanding how civil society mobilises the arts to catalyse social impact and change and participation in digital transformation. In addition, it also has a policy aspect on the question of how artists can shape regulations in digital society and how they can bring their views and insights into the legislative framework for digital transformation.

Another example is “[Digital Calligraffiti](#)”, a project in Berlin, Germany, which aims to experiment with how to use public space as a cultural space through digital tools, which is especially relevant during the physical distancing in quarantine. The project aims to address how this tool can help marginalised groups to express their feelings and artistic creation on walls that are widely broadcasted on digital platforms. This technique has also been replicated in Hong Kong, which also shows how digital tools can bring people from different parts of the world together.

Latin America and the Caribbean

There are huge differences in digitisation practices in the Caribbean and that, despite the increase in the number of digital projects during the pandemic, few previous policies or regular commercial frameworks were developed on a national scale. Nevertheless, many new and interesting models and frameworks have emerged in the region at the level of institution or artistic space. A characteristic problem in the Caribbean is that not all countries have a national cultural policy, and even those that have been implemented recently often have little reference to the digital realm

Most Caribbean cultural policies focus on heritage preservation and digitisation of archives in libraries, as well as on promoting security around the creation of cultural goods in terms of intellectual property. However, this varies strongly in different countries depending on internet access or digital literacy. Thus, Internet access is very limited, for example, in Haiti, Cuba and Jamaica, but there are exceptions such as Barbados which has launched its Creative Industries Development Act in 2016 and is currently supporting a new national digitisation project that has been launched in 2020/2021. For example, Jamaica which has just launched a new device policy for UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity which includes aspects such as the protection of artists and could therefore be a model to be used in the future in many of the countries in the region or internationally.

The pandemic significantly transformed the way Caribbean communities create and access cultural resources. In the Caribbean, for instance, it was of great importance that digital content was downloadable to make it more accessible. Institutions in the region had to quickly develop their own cultural policies around intellectual property, processing, collecting and preserving digital data, as well as working directly with communities with shared content.

An example of digital project of Caribbean cultural institutions is the National Museum of Bermuda, which has launched its new programme "[Tracing our roots](#)", a fully digital project that invites Bermudians to explore and honour their family histories through the museum's digital archive. Additionally, what is particularly innovative, is that they are implementing training initiatives for the community to teach how to share video content, how to scan archival documents and how to store those documents through the fully digitised programme.

A second example is the [Virtual Museum of Caribbean Migration and Memory](#), which is an EU-LAC project of the year 2020, and which combines digital and physical exhibits in a hybrid model offering the audience accessibility to previously undocumented stories and resources through an archival system designed across multiple platforms.

A third example is "[CATAPULT | A CARIBBEAN ARTS GRANT](#)", an artist-led programme by the Fresh Milk Barbados collective and Creative Kingston. It is a fully digital multipart programme that includes virtual artist residencies, curatorial talks, professional development and deployment of skills and practices for the artists and an e-publication to archive the entire project. In total, artists from 20 different Caribbean countries are involved in this project. What unites the three projects presented is that several of them exist outside national borders and policy frameworks. All have developed initiatives that take into account these multiple linguistic, geographical challenges and different framing needs.

Another example around legislative and regulatory aspects was Colombia's [Ley Naranja](#), a creative law, in which a number of digital aspects are mentioned in sub-chapters at the level of infrastructure and how to consolidate the digital infrastructure for the

distribution of cultural content, at the level of institutions, as well as at the level of cultural entrepreneurship and how to train cultural entrepreneurs to use digital tools.

To conclude, the rapid transformation during the pandemic facilitated many opportunities for the Caribbean region to break down some of the barriers that exist in the region of a linguistic, geographic, social and, specifically, also different learning points. The crisis also highlighted challenges that urgently need to be addressed, such as digital literacy, equitable access to internet services, broadband and equipment, monetisation, as well as a more collaborative approach to multi-stakeholder policy making that includes government policy makers and stakeholders.

Both for the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, emphasis should be placed on the current importance of really understanding what digitalisation means in the whole cultural and creative value chain, as well as the fair remuneration of artists and cultural creators in the digital sphere. Another important aspect is inclusive and democratic digital territories for broader and more inclusive access and literacy through digital tools and digital cultural experience.

Furthermore, it is necessary to increase public investment to guarantee infrastructure and accessibility to improve access to new technologies and the internet, and from his perspective, it is also relevant to promote market visibility and highlight the role of artists as creators and distributors of culture, as well as the importance of designing comprehensive and sustainable cultural strategies and policies.

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WEBINAR EU-LAC:

"CULTURAL POLICIES IN TIMES OF DIGITISATION: EXPERIENCES FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN"

04.05.2021 | 16:00-18:00 HRS (CEST)

Register: [zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QrLSVBZwTDCVDY-aTWCKew](https://zoom.us/join/zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QrLSVBZwTDCVDY-aTWCKew)

Welcome Address

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For the recording of the webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IafOtramox0>

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic goes beyond almost any crisis experienced in living memory. In addition to transforming, perhaps forever, the way we work, trade, travel, study and socialise, the impasse triggered by the pandemic reverberated globally and was exacerbated by the interaction between climate change, ecosystem fragility, social inequality, and political or financial instability. Specifically, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and the European Union (EU), the pandemic has aggravated numerous structural socio-economic and political weaknesses that were already affecting both regions.

However, on the other hand, the pandemic has proved to be an opportunity for the EU and LAC to reaffirm their commitment to the bi-regional partnership, and to join their forces to overcome the crisis and increase the chances for an inclusive and sustainable recovery. Indeed, one of the key conclusions that emerged from this webinar series was the cruciality of focusing on common values and the shared dedication to the United Nations Sustainable Agenda to overcome these challenging times.

The global scope of the crisis caused by COVID-19 demonstrates that the challenges in the era of globalisation know no borders, and no country can face them by means of autarchy. This requires a commitment to reform and revitalise the multilateral system. Two parallel crises need to be addressed, namely, the crisis of institutional efficiency and the crisis of legitimacy, as the multilateral system does not represent the current order anymore. This can be done by opening institutions to more transparent decision-making mechanisms and searching for alliances that will allow progress on certain issues. In this sense, it is crucial that EU and LAC - as they share strong historical and cultural ties, as well as common values and principles - join forces to preserve and strengthen multilateralism and contribute to effective global governance to address key issues such as inequality, the digital transformation, and environmental sustainability.

Another urgent issue is raising awareness of the potential of circular economy for a postcrisis green recovery. As much negativity as the pandemic has brought, it presents a unique opportunity for the concept of circular economy to gain momentum, as it not only addresses the economy but also our quality of life and aims at enabling societies to be resilient enough to cope with crises. In this sense, international cooperation is essential to exchange best practices and knowledge.

Moreover, the enormous challenges posed by the current context of the COVID-19 crisis emphasise the need to rethink volunteerism as a fundamental tool for sustainable development and to bring effective actions in remote communities, where official responses take longer to be implemented. Volunteerism is therefore a unique resource to transform and accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to place at the centre of all efforts the promise of “not leaving anyone behind”.

The pandemic also revealed that, while digital technologies offer opportunities such as the distribution of culture on a global level, on the other hand, they include difficulties regarding the impact of the pandemic on value chains and accessibility. Therefore, for digitisation to become a positive driver of change to unlock the full potential of culture, it is necessary both to make the cultural sector more resilient and the cultural services more inclusive and sustainable, and to invest in skills development.

The webinar series was enthusiastically attended by many relevant actors and entities, a sign of the willingness to collaborate and share experiences and ideas to advance the cooperation between the EU and LAC. It is essential to address these current problems maintaining a dialogue at all levels, and to include civil society and increase the people-to-people contact. In this sense, the EU-LAC Foundation will continue its efforts to connect actors who are willing to participate in the strategic bi-regional partnership, and to promote the great potential of the partnership to address current and future challenges and to develop better societies towards a more cooperative and sustainable world.

EU-LAC Foundation

The European Union – Latin America and Caribbean International Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation) was created in 2010 by the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) member states. Its Members are the Member states of the EU and CELAC as well as the EU itself. The Foundation is a tool of the EU-LAC partnership and its activities feed into the intergovernmental dialogue, in line with the bi-regional Action Plan.

The EU-LAC Foundation was entrusted with the mission of strengthening and promoting the strategic bi-regional relationship, enhancing its visibility and fostering active participation of the respective civil societies.

Based on this mission, the Foundation published the first series of six EU-LAC webinars in 2020, available via the following link: <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/eu-lac-webinars-covid-19>

