



**Report of the Dialogue Sessions “Café Mimir Andino”
“Specialisation of research and public investment: Impact, responsibility and community”**

Virtual Forum co-organised by ASCUN, OBREAL GLOBAL and the EU-LAC FOUNDATION

15 June 2021

Time: 10:00 am (Colombia time) // 17:00 CEST

Agenda

**Conversatorios
Cafés Mimir Andino**

Especialización de la investigación e inversión pública. Impacto, responsabilidad y comunidad

Dr. Ricard Esparza Masana
Profesor del Departamento de Economía y de Historia Económica
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Dra. Fatime Barbara Hegyi
Investigadora del Centro Común de Investigación
Comisión Europea

Modera:
Marcos Agurto Adriansén
Vicerrector de Investigación de la Universidad de Piura

Martes | **Hora:**
15 de junio | **10:00 COT**
| **17:00 CEST**

Registro:
<http://bit.ly/CafésMimirAndino>



The Dialogue sessions “Cafés Mimir Andino”

From June to August 2021, the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean International Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation), OBREAL Global Observatory (OBREAL Global) and the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN) jointly organised the **"Cafés Mimir Andino: Strategies to promote research and innovation in universities"**.

The virtual dialogue series was designed to serve the project’s partner universities and especially their research leadership. The objectives of this activity were:



- Exchange ideas about the implementation of research management and the model developed in the framework of the Mimir Andino Project;
- To offer a space for networking among leaders in research management;
- Promote bi-regional and international dialogue, relating the themes of the dialogues to different political, economic and social contexts.

Each session featured one or two experts from Europe and/or Latin America who shared reflections and examples on a specific topic; a research and innovation management leader associated with the Mimir Andino Project moderated the space and addressed questions to the expert(s); a group of rectors and vice-rectors from Andean Universities attended the dialogue and were invited to share ideas and experiences, and articulate additional questions to the guest expert.

Initial Statements

Dr. Fatime Barbara Hegyi, Researcher, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Seville, Spain

The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission supports European Union (EU) policies throughout the policy cycle, for example, from design to implementation and monitoring. They work on the one hand for the directorates in Brussels, and on the other hand they have a close collaboration with European governments and stakeholders at city, regional and national level. In addition, they collaborate with the University of Piura, Peru, which is a good example in terms of the design and implementation of the specialisation strategy. The area of urban and territorial development, which is Dr. Hegyi's field of responsibility, aims to propose site-based solutions for recovery, sustainability, competitiveness and to locate global agendas, as well as to draw knowledge from abroad back to Europe.

The Joint Research Centre has a new project in collaboration with Latin America that allows an important learning for the Centre. The aim of the project is to confirm the potential of specialisation and regionalisation strategies in Latin America, especially in Peru, Chile and Mexico, for territorial development. The Joint Research Centre has a unique combination of knowledge, data, analytical tools and models, as well as extensive links with stakeholders.

Specialisation policies have been introduced in the EU seven years ago, within the programming period of the European Union, as a policy experiment and their main ideas are to develop and combine innovation strengths with business and social opportunities. In Europe, the financing of regional development funds is linked to the existence of strategies such as specialisation, which outside Europe does not necessarily exist; therefore, in those areas, we speak about a entirely voluntary implementation of these strategies.

Hegy explained why specialisation strategies are successful and mentioned four factors:

1. The localised dimension, territorially centered;
2. The prioritisation process in the most promising areas of the territory;



3. Their potential for adaptability to local contexts and institutions; and
4. The mobilisation and commitment of stakeholders, including universities, which play an important role due to the idiosyncrasy of the project.

Dr Ricard Esparza Masana, Professor in Economics and Economic History, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

Dr Esparza Masana started his intervention with the explanation of the concept of “specialisation”: In relation to specialisation strategies, it is an inclusive specialisation based on territorial challenges (i.e. with a city, a state or a region) with problems or with a concrete context where the territorial agents of the innovation ecosystem work together under these challenges. For example, in Latin America, a common challenge is the lack of linkage between the supply of knowledge and the demand of the business network. The idea, in relation to the challenges (i.e. climate change, energy efficiency, etc.), is that the agents (i.e. companies, universities, research centres, etc.) work together to look at what these challenges are, what solutions they can provide, what the knowledge generated by the agents is like and whether it can be transferred to companies.

Within the complexities of these strategies, Dr Esparza Masana highlighted decentralisation as a key issue. While in Europe the strategies are implemented with a very regional and decentralised vision, in Latin America, there is still a strong centralisation and it is difficult to find decentralised strategies. Other challenges are:

1. Work on a governance model, in territorial capacities (national, regional, local).
2. Funding: It is necessary to align the strategy and its objective with the possibilities of actually implementing them.
3. Synergies between industrial policy and innovation policy should go hand in hand, even more so when innovation policy is not yet well developed.
4. Seek complementarities in funding and take advantage if there is a clear strategy, as well as taking advantage of any line of funding (i.e. international, national initiatives, etc.).
5. It is important to link education and encourage it.
6. Joint work and complementarity between agents are essential.

Questions and dialogue with the moderator Dr. Marcos Agurto Adrianzén, Vice Rector for Research, University of Piura, Peru

What are the key elements that give clear structure to the research specialisation process?

Dr Hegyi stressed that research and innovation go together - the area of specialisation has to effectively match with knowledge domains and market potentials. Universities can contribute to this process, however, this process varies a lot in each country and it is a strategy very much tailored to local contexts and institutions, so it is difficult to compare them. Strategies are also linked to the identification of priority areas where resources are concentrated. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation system is another key element.

Dr Esparza Masana also highlighted that specialisation looks different depending on the territory. While there are places with a natural sectorial specialisation, as in the case of Querétaro, Mexico, which



is characterised by an aerospace and automotive industry, and where innovation activities linked to these have been developed, there are other places where there are many types of much more diverse industries. In this case, it is about inclusive specialisation to solve challenges.

One of the most important aspects in the specialisation of research is its relationship with public investment. In this sense, what are the most important aspects for there to be coherence between one and the other? What are the common limitations that impede coherence in the actions of the actors?

According to Dr Hegyi, in Europe there is the framework of the seven-year multi-annual programming regulation, so each territory knows that it has this concrete time for innovation and research and can, in terms of specialisation strategies, decide in which areas to invest the money. In addition, cohesion policy is a catalyst for more public funding. It is also important to mention that EU co-financing is higher in less developed regions. They can also complement their investments with a wider range of funds.

Dr Esparza Masana also highlighted financing as a key issue. It is necessary to plan with a concrete budget and make the "matching" between what you want to implement and the estimated budget that is going to be available. His personal recommendation is to take advantage of the fact that there is a strategy already in place to implement those funds that have been made available.

The universities that are partners of the MIMIR Andino Project occupy a very important place in their respective regions. What could be the best role of these universities, so that in the territories where they are located there is progress in strategies of specialisation of research and innovation?

According to Dr Hegyi, there is not one best role but several possible roles to support the process that depends on the territory. Dr Esparza Masana stated that the natural role of universities was to generate debates on these issues. Moreover, universities do not have conflicts of interest with convening companies, intermediary agents or the regional government and they have the capacity to dynamise the activities of a regional agenda. However, it is not a question of substituting the regional government, but of promoting this knowledge.

In the case that a university wants a more active role in this process, what key aspects should it develop in order to play an important role in the specialisation?

This depends on the capacities within the local government and the idiosyncrasies of each place, but it would be ideal if there is collaboration over many years. In addition, the institutional reputation of the university is important, as well as internal leadership within the universities themselves. People are needed to lead these projects who are also engaged on a personal level.

What good practices of specialisation can you recommend from your experience to the Latin American context?

Firstly, an effective monitoring system to be able to follow how the areas of specialisation are progressing and how the market is developing, in order to be able to review the decisions made with regard to the strategies. In addition, continuous stakeholder collaboration is important. Two other aspects are transparency and access to project information.



In addition, three axes were mentioned:

1. Traditional: With public investment and direct results;
2. Thematic: Working under a challenge and monitoring how the challenge is evolving;
3. Long-term impact: A traditional challenge in Latin America is the short-term nature of strategies that are linked to political periods. Therefore, decisions must come from a territorial consensus to ensure that they last in the long term. They can share funds and have a single governance body that distributes funding proportionally to the different regions, but they work together.

Information about the Mimir Andino Project

With a duration of 4 years (2018-2022), the Mimir Andino Project is primarily designed to assist and encourage partner universities in South American (and specifically Andean) countries to better understand the status quo of their research management approaches, from performance and evaluation to management structures and effectiveness.

The project provides them with a research management model that helps them achieve their research and innovation objectives with respect to national and regional development. Consequently, the partner universities share experiences in order to build and strengthen capacities on the organisation and management of innovation and research, and understand their current models, principles and standards. Knowledge transfer is also internal among the South American partners, who share common geographical, economic and scientific interests and are eager to deepen their regional cooperation and integration in higher education and research.

Links of interest

Video of the Webinar in Spanish:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CEXuIVxSYQ&t=31s>

Smart Specialisation Platform of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission:

<https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

This webinar was organised in the framework of the activities of the Mimir Andino Project (<http://mimirandino.org/>).

The organisers of the webinar and their representatives, Dr Oscar Domínguez González, Executive Director of ASCUN, Dr Adrián Bonilla of the EU-LAC Foundation, and Dr Ramón Torrent of the Obreal Observatorio Global, thank the participants for their contributions and assistance.

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