



III EU-LAC Youth Days

- Report -



Background

The III European Union (EU) - Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Youth Days were organised by the EU-LAC Foundation in collaboration and with the support of the European Union. They were held at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, on 15-16 November 2022, in a hybrid format to facilitate virtual access to the sessions.

In continuity with the successful first two editions held in Quito (Ecuador, 2015) and Zaragoza (Spain, 2018), this third edition of the EU-LAC Youth Days resumed the process of exchange and dialogue between young people from both regions.

The EU-LAC Foundation is an international organisation based in Hamburg (Germany), composed of the European Union (EU) and its Member States, the EU itself, and all the Latin American and Caribbean countries that make up the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Its mission is to strengthen the bi-regional strategic partnership by promoting dialogue and knowledge exchange between civil society and government decision-makers on priority issues for both regions, including youth.



The overall objective of the III EU-LAC Youth Days was to provide a platform for constructive and meaningful dialogues involving young people from both regions in the reflection on the future of bi-regional relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, and thus contribute ideas for the future. In this framework, common challenges and opportunities linked to issues such as youth participation, advocacy and engagement, education, employment, social inclusion, and green and digital transitions were discussed.

This activity was part of the European Year of Youth 2022, which highlighted the importance of European youth in building a more prosperous, sustainable and inclusive future and, therefore, was also aligned with the initiative of the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Council of CELAC. It also coincided with the new Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action (2022-2027) launched in October 2022, which seeks to build a strategic partnership with young people and create spaces and opportunities for them to participate in policy formulation and decision-making.

Participation and format

The face-to-face participation consisted of ca. 40 young people from over 30 countries of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean who were selected, and invited in their personal capacity, amongst representatives of youth networks, institutions linked to youth and activists who are involved with the most pressing common challenges of both regions in the field. The participation of young people from the different sub-regions of LAC, representatives of indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, and with equal gender representation, is highlighted. The event also counted with the participation of almost 150 people through the virtual room, who also filled out an online survey to know their opinion regarding the themes of the event. The results of the survey are attached at the end of this report.

The first day of the event was carried out through an opening segment dedicated to interventions by authorities and representatives of the organising entities, followed by three thematic panels on Youth and 1. Participation, Advocacy and engagement; 2. Education, Employment and Social Inclusion, and; 3. Just and fair Green and Digital Transitions. The second day was devoted to working sessions designed for discussion and brainstorming on common challenges, opportunities and best practices around participation, advocacy and engagement, education, employment, green digital transitions, and social inclusion. The event concluded with a final plenary session to



present the conclusions of the working groups and the event. The event was conducted in English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation except for the working groups.

Participants

Opening remarks by Authorities

- **Adrián BONILLA**, Executive Director, EU-LAC Foundation
- **Jutta URPIAINEN**, Commissioner for International Partnerships, European Commission
- **Claudia GINTERSDORFER**, Head of Division Regional Affairs, Americas Managing Directorate, European External Action Service and EU Co-Chair of the EU-LAC Foundation
- **Roberto Alejandro SALAFIA**, Argentinian Ambassador in the Czech Republic and CELAC Co-Chair of the EU-LAC Foundation
- **Veronika KUCHYŇOVA ŠMIGOLOVÁ**, Deputy Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
- **Eva LEHEČKOVÁ**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Panel 1: Youth - Participation, Advocacy and Engagement

- Facilitator: **Lourdes ARAMAYO**, Co-Founder Anglo-American University Prague, Director of the Latin American and the Caribbean Centre
- **Lucía CHOCARRO** (Spain), International Relations Member, National Youth Council
- **Juan Carlos VARGAS** (Chile), Coordinator, Latin-American Youth Network for Democracy
- **Michelle BELFOR** (Suriname), Member of the Youth Advisory Group of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Panel 2: Youth - Education, Employment and Social Inclusion

- Facilitator: **Francesco CHIODI**, Coordinator, Italo-Latin American Institute
- **Anna Marie NEŠPŮRKOVÁ** (Czechia), Deputy Director, Ibero-American Studies Centre, Charles University, Czechia
- **Leticia Liseth TITUAÑA PICUASI** (Ecuador), Co-founder, Kichwa Institute of Science, Technology and Humanities, Ecuador
- **Leonardo PÁRRAGA** (Colombia), LAC Youth Leader, Member of Directorate-General for International Partnerships Youth Sounding Board, European Commission

Panel 3. Youth - Just and fair Green and Digital Transitions

- Facilitator: **Gabriela NONES**, Specialist in Inclusive Governance, United Nations Development Programme



- **Felipe BOSCH** (Italy/Argentina), Analyst, Grand Continent. Co-founder Americas Programme, Groupe d'études Géopolitiques, France
- **María José VALVERDE** (Costa Rica), Project Coordinator, Frankfurt School – United Nations Environment Programme Collaborating Centre for Climate & Sustainable Energy Finance, Germany
- **Lauren RITCHIE** (Bahamas), Founder, Eco Justice Project. Intersectional climate advocacy and education storyteller. Podcast host, Caribbean

Final Plenary Session

- **Denis THIEULIN**, Deputy Head of Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean of Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission
- **Diego DURÁN CRUZ**, Programme Manager, EU-LAC Foundation

Opening

Adrián Bonilla, Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation, inaugurated the III EU-LAC Youth Days, framing the event within a moment of high expectations in the reactivation of bi-regional relations. He highlighted the importance of the meeting of EU and CELAC foreign ministers held in Buenos Aires in October 2022. This meeting, he pointed out, made it possible to draw up a common agenda with a view to the organisation of the Summit of Heads of State and Government in July 2023. The last meeting at this level between the EU and CELAC took place in 2015 and marked the end of a period of intense collaboration. The economic crisis of 2008, which hit Latin America in 2010, was one of the explanatory factors, to which several other factors such as the pandemic and more recently the conflict in Ukraine were added.

However, Dr Bonilla emphasised that the dawn of a new era in bi-regional relations is beginning to be seen, with the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean once again recognising each other as complementary regions in the contemporary world. Indeed, there are close economic links between the two regions since, on the one hand, the EU remains the main direct investor in LAC and, on the other, the EU continues to be one of the most important destinations for Latin American exports. There are also common interests in political terms, which are reflected in the will to preserve multilateral mechanisms for dealing with international issues.

In view of these specific interests, the Buenos Aires meeting made it possible to establish a common agenda focused on development issues, green cooperation, concern for the energy



matrix and the need for transformation. Furthermore, climate change and its consequences should be addressed as a cross-cutting issue, and social cohesion should be considered through public policies that should focus on equity and equality. In this sense, the role of the EU-LAC Foundation is to disseminate this agenda and to build opportunities for dialogue at the societal level, starting today with the organisation of this dialogue amongst young people.

Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships at the European Commission, began her speech by mentioning the unprecedented geopolitical moment that the EU is experiencing. Given this situation, she said, the EU wished to reinstate a bi-regional cooperation relationship with CELAC, which could not take place without the participation of young people. She stressed that on both sides of the Atlantic, there was a growing number of young people committed to moving towards sustainable and inclusive development. The EU developed its first Youth Action Plan (YAP) in the EU External Action for the period 2022-2027. It is the first ever policy framework for strategic cooperation with young people worldwide to build a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future based on three core objectives: to engage, empower and connect.

Commissioner Urpilainen also referred to the creation of the first Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships, which enables 25 young people from around the world to advise the Directorate-General for International Partnerships on the design and implementation of policies and programmes that enhance youth participation and empowerment. Many EU Delegations are setting up similar youth advisory councils. She concluded her speech by stressing the importance of this conference in the preparation process for the next bi-regional summit of heads of State, in which she hoped there would be a process of youth involvement.

Claudia Gintersdorfer, Head of Division Regional Affairs, Americas Managing Directorate, European External Action Service, emphasised the importance of reviving the EU-CELAC relationship in the face of current geopolitical and environmental challenges. In the wake of the events in Ukraine, the countries of both regions were able to reaffirm their common values in favour of peace. This was reflected in the votes in favour of EU resolutions in the UN Assembly by Latin American countries. However, she insisted that this new relationship must be built beyond the narrative of shared values, culture and languages, but rather on concrete interests.

Claudia Gintersdorfer added that, between the climate crisis, the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences in terms of food security and inflation, and in the face of increasing inequality, the future is not synonymous with optimism. But in the face of this reality, young people are



demonstrating a strong commitment to these struggles to build a sustainable future for themselves. She concluded by mentioning some of the EU's initiatives with Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the BELLA programme, which strengthens connectivity between the two regions, and the COVAX mechanism during the pandemic to donate vaccines to LAC countries, amongst others.

Roberto Alejandro Salafia, Argentinian Ambassador in the Czech Republic, began his presentation by referring to the European integration model, which was a source of inspiration for the Latin American region to seek a process of economic and social progress through integration, although this model is not entirely replicable in LAC.

He pointed out that today the experiences and needs in both continents are different. For example, in the European Union the emphasis is on the need for the green and digital transition, whilst in LAC the priorities revolve around issues of poverty and food security or access to education and health. For these reasons, it is important that the two regions work together to decide how to prioritise resources to find effective solutions to all their challenges.

He concluded that youth is a resource in which each country must invest, in order to avoid the emigration of skilled young people (as observed in many LAC countries), as a consequence of the absence of satisfactory career paths.

Veronika Kuchyňová Šmigolová, Deputy Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, framed this youth event within the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union. She stressed that the III Youth Days are taking place close to 17 November, a historic date for the Czech Republic and Charles University as it is not only the International Students' Day, but also represents an important date in the struggle for freedom and democracy, which in the past was synonymous with tragic events, but also with examples that underline that young people can make a difference.

Deputy Minister Kuchyňová concluded by referring to the events taking place in Ukraine, close to its borders, but also in other parts of the world, with the rise of oppressive regimes seeking to undermine the free world. She therefore reiterated the importance for the Czech Republic of EU-LAC relations to spread the values of peace, freedom, and protection of human rights.

Eva Lehečková, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, closed the opening ceremony by stressing that Charles University has always been at the centre of important events in Czech



history. She pointed out that Charles University attaches particular importance to intercultural exchange in order to face challenges such as climate change or social inequalities and therefore shared her enthusiasm to listen to the suggestions that will emerge from these dialogues.

Discussion panels

Panel: Youth - Participation, Advocacy and Engagement

Lucía Chocarro (Spain), International Relations Member of the National Youth Council of Spain emphasised the participatory and representative aspect of the Youth Council, explaining how it works following a model that includes other entities, seeking the greatest possible inclusiveness, whilst making use of different governing bodies. She underlined the importance of thinking about proposals for the involvement of non-associated youth and in this line, as a good practice, she offered the example of the development of structured dialogue during the *troika* of the Council of the European Union. That is, through a model based on the creation of "youth embassies" throughout the country's territory and the creation of the National Working Group which, together with the person in charge of youth in the permanent commission of the Youth Council, creates the final list of the positions of Spanish youth.

She stressed that this process allows to encourage the participation of young people who are not associated with youth movements as part of this group leads the process. In addition, it also allows for the collection of ideas that contribute to the positions that the National Working Group and the Youth Council share during the youth conferences that take place in each of the three presidencies of the Council of the European Union that form the Troika Group.

Lucía Chocarro underlined the need to ensure that spaces created for young people are inclusive and thus remove barriers to their participation. For example, for numerous events where youth can engage in dialogue, it is observed that participation is made up of students of political science or international relations.

Juan Carlos Vargas (Chile), Coordinator of the Latin American Youth Network for Democracy began his intervention by mentioning that, contrary to the idea that young people are not interested in the public sphere and in politics, there is interest, but they decide to get involved in a different way to traditional models. In this sense, the role that civil society associations are playing in mobilising young people is remarkable, especially for young people who do not feel identified with traditional channels of participation. By getting involved in these civil society associations,



they can participate in the political discussion on the issues that attract their attention, for example, issues related to climate change where young people are leaders.

On the other hand, he explained in his presentation that one of the most important barriers to youth participation lies in the fact that several events take place in large cities or capital cities. These modalities prevent or hinder the participation of young people from the interior of the country who cannot travel to participate. He stressed that one of the positive points that emanated from the pandemic was the increasingly significant organisation of virtual or hybrid events, which facilitate more equal geographical participation.

Juan Carlos Vargas highlighted the importance of providing continuity to the dialogues through follow-up mechanisms. This continuity work is even more necessary a few months before the bi-regional summit, where young people could make their proposals known to decision-makers and ensure a place for these suggestions at the summit.

Michelle Belfor (Suriname), Member of the Youth Advisory Group of the United Nations Population Fund began her presentation underlining the importance of youth participation, especially in terms of the purpose of such participation. Indeed, for participation to be productive, young people need to be able to participate in spaces where they really have the possibility to advise the people responsible for the design of public policies. This is key, as the other panellists reinforced, so that participation is not limited to declarations of intent, but that the knowledge and reports that have been produced during the dialogues have tangible continuity. She defined this lack of concretisation as one of the barriers to youth participation.

Another barrier to youth participation, she pointed out, is language, especially in the Caribbean where a multitude of different languages coexist. This makes it necessary for messages to be adapted to each local reality to reach as many young people as possible. Differences in education levels must be considered when messages are disseminated.

Michelle Belfor pointed out that more and more often one can see the participation in international fora of indigenous women, who had to overcome a series of obstacles to reach such spaces. For these positive examples to multiply, it is essential to address alternatives to overcome barriers to an inclusive youth participation.

As an overall conclusion of this panel on participation, advocacy and engagement, it was emphasised that youth in both regions share commonalities in the barriers to achieving full and



more inclusive participation. Another key message was that youth is not homogeneous between the two regions, nor within the regions, which means that it is not possible to speak of youth as a unitary core, but that it is necessary to speak of youth in plural.

Panel: Youth – Education and Employment

Anna Marie Nešpůrková (Czechia), Deputy Director of Ibero-American Studies Centre at the Charles University in her presentation, she mentioned the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and the opportunity it represents for students to go to another European country to study or work without requiring a visa. In her opinion, doing something similar in Latin America and the Caribbean for students could be relevant, as it would allow students to gain experience, both professionally and personally. In terms of employment, a person is more attractive in the market if he or she has experience abroad. Erasmus+ also represents a unique opportunity to open your perspectives and think differently about cultural differences.

However, Anna Marie Nešpůrková warned that the programme could be improved. First in terms of accessibility, as there are many students who cannot afford Erasmus+ for financial reasons. In fact, the grants provided by the European Union are only enough to pay the rent and therefore students need another source of income to be able to benefit from the experience. As a solution to these financial obstacles, the initiative of the Czech Embassy in Santiago de Chile was mentioned, which offered free accommodation to Czech students.

According to Anna Marie Nešpůrková, Erasmus+ is a programme that allows to awaken interest in politics not only in the host country but also in her own country. The lack of interest of young people is a problem nowadays, which is explained by the fact that they do not necessarily understand politics. It is therefore important to have entities that explain politics to the youth sector and try to establish a dialogue so that they can be actively involved in the political process.

Finally, about education, she stressed the imbalance between theory and practice in universities, proposing that, for example, one semester should be reserved for internships in their field, to have a complete training when it comes to entering the labour market.

Leticia Liseth Tituaña Picuasi (Ecuador), Co-Founder of the Kichwa Institute of Science, Technology and Humanities focused her presentation on the gender inequality that exists in access to higher education, especially in which STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering,



and mathematics), where women are still in the minority. It is essential to think of solutions that could be proposed to encourage women to choose this professional field.

To this end, Leticia Tituaña proposed giving visibility to the difficulty for young women with children to develop a successful career path. This incompatibility would have to be addressed in cooperation programmes with a gender perspective, which also considers diverse cultural perspectives and personal choices. Another proposal put forward was the creation of free day-care centres within universities, which would give young mothers access to quality education as well. This issue is becoming increasingly relevant within bi-regional cooperation under the theme of gender equality in care, which allows us to think of solutions to free up, above all women, from care tasks, whether for the elderly, dependent persons, or children, in order to dedicate this time to other aspects of their lives.

On the other hand, she emphasised the opportunities that the green transition brings in terms of jobs in the fields of technology, science, etc. Currently, when young people from middle-income countries who have studied careers such as artificial intelligence in other high-income countries return to their home country, they face a lack of job opportunities. The green and digital transitions bring with them a multitude of career opportunities to engage young people and provide them with suitable employment. However, this cannot happen without a governmental will to invest in youth, their education and in research or technology centres and to implement measures such as imposing on companies a quota for young researchers. In short, governments must create favorable ecosystems for young people to return after an experience studying abroad.

Leonardo Párraga (Colombia), LAC Youth Leader and member of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission's Youth Sounding Board highlighted in his intervention that, through the exercise of participation, young people give visibility to new models of participation that can be generated. Indeed, in numerous youth organisations, it can be observed that participation does not take place according to traditional models, but in models that are, for example, more horizontal.

Leonardo Párraga pointed out that there is a strong complementarity between participation and education through the slogan "learning by doing". To illustrate his point, he referred to the work of the European Commission's Youth Sounding Board, where young people formulate proposals on where EU funds should go internationally. This working group of young people from all over the world was actively involved in drawing up the EU's Youth Action Plan in the EU External Action.



This initiative enables a horizontal cooperation of youth with EU decision-makers. At the same time, it is an important responsibility for young people to engage in surveys and consultations, in order to formulate proposals more adapted to the needs of young people in their diversity.

Finally, he spoke about the knowledge gaps and their consequences for the participation of young people. In response to this, he proposed formulating recommendations to promote free access to education or the possibility of benefiting companies that provide opportunities for young people.

Panel: Youth - Just and fair Green and Digital Transitions

Felipe Bosch (Italy/Argentina), Analyst of the Grand Continent and Co-Founder of the Americas Programme of the Groupe d'études Géopolitiques stressed that it is essential to generate a debate on the concept of "youth", as well as the positioning of the participants as representatives of the voice of bi-regional youth in the case of this event. He pointed out that the commitment of young people in the construction of other futures through the green transition, for example, even often from a radical or reformist point of view, is increasingly evident.

Felipe Bosch indicated that, given the scenario of young people's dissatisfaction with being part of unequal societies and political systems characterised by macroeconomic instability, as well as sharing space and generation with people living in asymmetrical material conditions, the social construction of alternative futures through the possibilities offered by the green transition must give way to urgent attention to the problem.

For example, he referred to Youth for Climate, a movement that embraces developmentalism and argues the need to accept fossil resource exploitation as a condition for the redistribution of resources to more vulnerable sectors. However, he regretted that the urgent attention to one problem eliminates any possibility of dedicating time to the articulation of solutions and public policies in terms of a path towards other futures.

María José Valverde (Costa Rica), Project Coordinator at the Collaborating Centre for Climate & Sustainable Energy Finance at the Frankfurt School-United Nations Environment Programme began her presentation by referring to climate change and its close link to youth as an existential threat that young people have to face.

In this sense, she highlighted two scenarios. On the one hand, a feeling of "apathy" on the part of young people in the face of the scale of the problem, which not only encompasses environmental



protection but also the questioning of current economic models, political regimes, inequality and justice. On the other hand, it may provoke too much anxiety about aspects of their lives that may be affected. Moreover, this anxiety is amplified by the many barriers that prevent proposed solutions from having a real impact, e.g. fossil fuel companies and their economic interests, lack of representation in important debates or lack of concrete action. As an example, she underlined that COP27 is turning into a luxury networking event, far from its mission of establishing concrete solutions for effective results in the fight against climate change.

Regarding solutions to these concerns, María José Valverde said that people cannot be convinced by data alone. She referred to the complexity of formulating recommendations or identifying good practices on data and information, as access to and evaluation of data and information is a relatively new issue. As a recommendation to young people, one strategy would be to focus on the general view, highlighting these kinds of issues in bi-regional spaces to raise awareness about the inclusion of alternative knowledge, accountability, climate finance, climate justice, etc.

However, she stressed that the problem here is funding, channelled from industrialised countries to the most vulnerable. Therefore, this kind of conferences have an important role to play in raising awareness of the insufficiency of climate finance to the most vulnerable countries. She stressed that, from a European point of view, there is definitely awareness that investing in climate is the future and that it is a responsibility that has to be shared with developing countries.

She concluded by indicating that the public sector, whether European or Latin American, does not have sufficient capacity to cover the financing needs of mitigation and adaptation strategies, so there must also be a channelling of finance from the private sector. This requires an emphasis on innovation to attract the private sector to climate investments, combining profitability with low-emissions and climate resilience objectives. For example, debt-for-climate swaps meaning that the International Monetary Fund forgives debt in exchange for capital being invested in climate projects.

Lauren Ritchie (Bahamas), Founder of the Eco Justice Project, intersectional climate advocacy and education storyteller and podcast host highlighted the role of digital media in engaging young people in environmental advocacy and the need to improve access to climate information. She stressed the importance of having educational resources - such as articles and academic papers - translated and disseminated to the communities most vulnerable and affected by climate change. She also emphasised the need to highlight diverse perspectives by giving Latin American and



Caribbean countries, particularly youth, a platform, and spaces for dialogue to share their experiences and perspectives.

On the role of storytelling and digital education, Lauren Ritchie spoke about her work as a platform for the perspectives of underrepresented communities and uplift communities of colour, small island nations and other disproportionately vulnerable groups in climate change conversations. Through social media infographics, written articles, panel discussions, podcasts and short films, she explored various forms of digital media to share climate information in a digestible way with the voices of diversity at the forefront, to reach a broad international audience, and thus learn through connections across regions. She also underlined the role of personal stories in combating public desensitisation and apathy towards climate issues, as a much more impactful solution than data.

Finally, she stressed that more diverse perspectives and meaningful youth participation in global climate conferences are still needed. Therefore, highlighting young activists on digital platforms represents an effective means of inspiring others to empower themselves as climate leaders.

This panel concluded on the opportunity presented by intergenerational dialogues to address the climate challenge together. It is imperative to learn to listen and receive the value that each actor can bring to be truly inclusive.

Working group sessions

The second day of the III EU-LAC Youth Days was held in group work sessions. Two working groups were formed according to linguistic criteria: one in English and the other in Spanish. Both discussed the three central themes of the event dedicated to the role of youth: 1) Participation, Advocacy and Engagement 2) Education and Employment, 3) Just and fair Green and Digital Transitions.

On the theme of youth participation, advocacy and engagement, the groups discussed the need to provide financial support for the education of young people in advocacy and engagement, to look for new digital tools that encourage participation and to create digital spaces that include information to promote the institutionalisation of youth participation in EU & LAC countries, for example through the creation of websites, with a modern style, or, if they already exist, to think about improving communication around these platforms for more visibility.



In order to reach a meaningful participation of a larger number of young people, the groups considered it essential to keep in mind the existence of diversities between ethnicities, languages, nationalities and to ensure that information is accessible to all. The groups insisted on the necessity to work towards the removal of barriers to participation such as language, culture, internet access and gender inequality. On the other hand, they highlighted the requirement to organise and promote participation strategies from the local level to reach a more significant number of young people. This involvement at the local level can be translated into the organisation of workshops or meetings to obtain realistic recommendations to encourage inclusive youth participation.

In addition, around the world, youth participation can be hindered by political intimidation through pressure exerted against certain groups, especially in countries where there is a lack of diversity of thought. Activists receive varying degrees of threats and must be provided with protection and support. Following the theme of violence, participants highlighted that gender violence is also a major obstacle to youth participation and empowerment. Added to this is the fact that, in some parts of the world, activism has a negative and radical connotation whilst they are only trying to bring about changes to improve their future. A change of mentality about youth activism would be relevant to improve youth participation in dialogue spaces. One of the solutions mentioned by participants on this issue was the generation of spaces for intergenerational dialogues.

Another solution proposed was the dissemination of examples of young people in high positions of responsibility, for example in international organisations, in order to improve the image of youth participation. For example, the United Nations recognises the important role that young people can play in conflict prevention and resolution and as crucial actors for the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives through its youth, peace and security agenda.

On the other hand, they noted that it is essential to change the image that youth have of politics and parties. Young people must get involved in changing these traditional models to encourage more participation. The possibility of organising their own round table to discuss this issue would be an interesting way to find ideas for creating new political spaces, operating according to more horizontal and inclusive models, which are more in line with the expectations of young people today. However, this strategy cannot work without the collaboration of policy makers who must learn to value the contributions of youth and to dialogue with young people.



On this issue, it was suggested that the EU should take responsibility for promoting "good institutions" and fostering the institutionalisation of youth participation in LAC. The EU initiative to involve young people was highlighted with the creation of the *Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships*, which aims to create a real, fundamental, and long-lasting change in how the EU engages with young people in its development cooperation. Under this programme, 25 young people from around the world were selected to influence the EU's external action through its international partnerships. Within this group, there are associations from Latin America and the Caribbean that contribute to the systematisation of youth participation in the region.

On the theme of education and employment, the working groups stressed that it is essential to guarantee access to technology for young people in Latin America and the Caribbean who are in critical socio-economic conditions, to provide them with useful information that contributes new ideas on global issues, including the green transition. It is crucial to incorporate critical thinking in the educational agenda and curriculum, while promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education as a tool for opportunity and adaptation to solve social justice matters. At the same time, funds should be created to support youth entrepreneurship, especially in the field of green and digital transitions, and technical support should be provided to manage and realise these projects. However, it is also particularly important to strengthen the development of global citizenship, with common problems and challenges, through education.

On the other hand, it is essential to promote opportunities such as the Erasmus+ Programme amongst higher education students in Latin America and the Caribbean and to develop dual education including theory and practice to facilitate the professional insertion of young people. Developing the practical side of careers can be done through internships or work contracts. On this point, legislation is an essential tool to regulate internships and avoid contributing to abusive practices that foster and perpetuate social inequalities. However, they stressed that education must be thought beyond the traditional curricular spaces, also promoting the acquisition of transversal and interpersonal competences.

Regarding employment, they insisted on the importance of generating greater transparency in the income gap to reduce and end the existing gap in both regions. On the other hand, the creation of opportunities for adequate employment must include minorities, who cannot be denied access to highly competitive skills. In the same way, it is important to think about ways of working that ensure gender equality and the conciliation of family and personal life.



Regarding Just and fair Green and Digital Transitions, the working groups proposed to invest in STEM careers and to encourage the participation of young STEM students in projects that can benefit different environmental issues. In this respect, it is necessary to foster women to move towards STEM by removing the barriers they face from a young age that prevent them from moving into this key field in building a sustainable future. This sector represents a vector of numerous professional opportunities.

They underlined the importance of prioritising the development of the necessary infrastructure to ensure electricity, internet and generally the availability of technologies for access to digital resources and opportunities that already exist and to identify infrastructure problems at local, regional, and national level to solve them.

At the same time, for this to be possible, developed countries must honour those agreements already established and support the transition of developing countries, with initiatives such as debt-for-climate swaps. An example of such agreements is the \$100 billion fund agreed at COP 15, which was not provided by the countries that signed up.

In addition, there needs to be protection for activists in Latin America and the Caribbean, as they are victims of repression and suffer high levels of violence, without respect for human rights treaties, such as the Escazu Agreement. The group urged the revision of the Political Declaration of Quito, adopted during the IV Summit of CELAC and the Final Declaration of the World Youth Conference Lisbon+21.

Summary of proposals and recommendations

At the end of the second day of the event, both working groups met to share their proposals through a final plenary session open to the general public.

On youth participation, advocacy and awareness raising, the need to create long-term sustainable spaces was highlighted, continuing the work after the III EU-LAC Youth Days. These spaces must be of different natures to take into account the multiple expectations in terms of youth participation. It was proposed to move towards a combination of structured spaces, more inclusive and diverse spaces, more informal spaces, and spaces for sub-regional dialogues, with representation from the different sub-regions. The creation of such spaces is essential to ensure continuity and follow-up of the recommendations and ideas that emerge from these meetings.



One of the most frequently mentioned recommendations during this event was the need to think about youth participation from the perspective of inclusiveness: the profound heterogeneity existing between the EU and LAC regions, but also within each region, was mentioned, so it is essential that the dissemination of information considers the differences in terms of language, level of education, as well as the diversity of needs depending on the region.

The necessity of interconnectivity between young people is another key point that emerged in the recommendations of the working groups. It was suggested, for example, the creation of a platform where all information is collected and can be exchanged between countries and regions. This platform should be conceived as a tool where young people themselves inspire and empower other. This must be combined with the development of digital and non-digital tools to connect the youth sector, but also to improve their education and participation.

On the topic of youth, education and employment, the importance of reconsidering what education is and how the new generations are being trained was underlined. One of the ideas shared in the recommendations of the working groups was to invest in public education to improve access and reduce inequality, rethinking curricula, implementing relevant subjects such as civic education, in its new conception, and addressing key notions of citizenship and global citizenship.

In terms of higher education, the urgency of reconsidering the balance between theory and practice in university degrees was highlighted. Currently, there is a great demand from young people to have access to more internship opportunities within their respective degree programmes. Therefore, these opportunities do not have to place an unbearable financial burden on young people, which would lead to increasing pre-existing inequalities.

However, the recommendations made on education and employment face some challenges that make their implementation difficult. First, poverty remains high in several countries. The high costs of education, juxtaposed with the fact that young people must work, lead to a devaluation of education. Not everyone has access to quality education, so employability will be different. In addition, several young graduates must face the reality of labour markets that are inaccessible after graduation and the fact that, without contacts, it is difficult to find opportunities.

Finally, to encourage the involvement of young people in the processes of just and fair green and digital transitions, it was recommended that STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education be promoted as an adaptive tool for solving social justice problems.



Indeed, green and digital transitions represent a huge employment opportunity in these areas, provided that governments invest in these transitions. They called for special vigilance regarding women and the need to enable them to access these professions. They also stressed the importance of building bridges between people with technical and scientific knowledge and people with social science and political backgrounds to enable the translation of technical-scientific knowledge into science-based public policy making and thus prevent greenwashing and the formulation of policies without positive and concrete environmental impact. The issue was also approached from a mental health perspective, allowing young people to communicate their anxiety about an uncertain future, and to create spaces where marginalised voices can be empowered to create literature or discussions related to climate change in a way that is more attention-grabbing than data on greenhouse gases or carbon dioxide concentration.

It is important to note that these proposals and recommendations formulated in the working groups are also reflected in the results of the online survey completed by the remote participants. The results of this survey as well as the additional proposals are attached at the end of this report.

Conclusions

Based on the developments of the two days of the event, the proposals and recommendations that emerged from the debates, and the content discussed around the themes of the meeting, the III EU-LAC Youth Days lead to the following conclusions:

- **Disseminating and following up** on the ideas presented at this event is important in view of the EU-CELAC Summit in 2023.
- **The inclusiveness of youth participation events** is essential to formulate proposals that are better suited to the diversity of expectations and needs. Whenever these events are organised, it is important to question the voices that are still missing in the process to address the obstacles that prevent the participation of a significant part of youth, understood as a concept that encompasses a multitude of diverse realities.
- **The transversality** that goes beyond the topics discussed in this meeting makes it essential to promote a diagonal concept of youth that extends to all topics. It is always necessary to ensure that the interests of the new generations are considered and that they do not face the same challenges as today.



The III EU-LAC Youth Days provided an opportunity for a group of young people from both sides of the Atlantic to think about how to work together to bring about the changes needed to build a sustainable future. Young people are central actors in this challenge, and it is essential that they take ownership of it, supported by the opportunities offered by the bi-regional relationship between the EU and LAC.

These Days had an enriching content and left the image of a great commitment of youth to translate their ideas into actions. As Denis Thieulin, Deputy Head of Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Directorate General for International Partnerships of the European Commission, mentioned at the closing session, the EU is very willing to involve youth in the construction of public policies and decisions with inclusiveness. In the bi-regional dialogue between the EU and LAC, young people play an indispensable role. The ideas and recommendations formulated on the occasion of the III EU-LAC Youth Days will therefore be of great usefulness to feed the discussions during the next EU-CELAC Summit in 2023.

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Annexes

1. Biographical dossier of participants
2. Analysis of online surveys
3. Photos
4. Projects of young participants