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Strategic Keys of the EU-CELAC Partnership



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STRATEGIC KEYS OF THE EU-CELAC PARTNERSHIP

ANTECEDENTS

The third EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government held on 17-18 July 2023 in Brussels provided an opportunity to generate a strategic dialogue on the challenges and opportunities for cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), which have changed considerably since the last meeting at the highest political level in 2015.

As part of its mission to promote the exchange between governmental authorities and civil societies of the two regions, the EU-LAC Foundation organised different thematic EU-LAC Fora in the run-up to the Summit, aimed at generating inputs to enrich the agenda of discussions of high-level authorities. In this framework, the EU-LAC Foundation advocated taking a fresh look at the interests and needs of both regions (and sub-regions) and engaging in more equitable cooperation mechanisms that affect the daily life of citizens, the economy and politics.

During the II EU-LAC Forum of Journalists, the EU-LAC Think Tank Meeting, the EU-LAC Knowledge Forum, the EU-LAC Gender Equality Forum, the EU-LAC Just Transitions Forum and the Meeting of Intergovernmental Organisations, participants identified and shared recommendations and key actions for the adoption of common lines of initiatives, programmes and public policies that help to articulate the links between both regions. The main takeaways of these civil society and multi-stakeholder fora fall within the strategic thematic areas of the EU-LAC Foundation and provide opportunities to be supported by public and private institutions which implement programmes in both regions. As a result, this document summarises those main takeaways to showcase the potential of the bi-regional EU-CELAC partnership at the global level, with the 2030 Agenda as an umbrella.

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1. THE EU-CELAC PARTNERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION CAN SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BOTH REGIONS

SDG 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.

The EU and LAC states can play a key role in establishing and deepening the political dialogue and cooperation programmes in the field of education and access, due to shared values and principles being mirrored by their commitment to social inclusion, and gender equality, as well as their focus on youth and sustainability. The EU and LAC regions engage in more student and academic exchanges than other regions in the world. Bi-regional alliances for promoting access to quality education, increasing the mobility of students, professors, researchers and administrative staff and for recognising and accrediting degrees and joint study programmes, foster links between professionals with global visions, competencies and political will to be applied in the different political, and economic and social spheres of our societies.

In order to build a worthwhile future for the societies in the EU and LAC, education and knowledge transfer is crucial for providing answers that enable sustainable development in both regions. Equal access to education is an essential part of social cohesion, and transdisciplinary approaches to learning contribute significantly to reducing inequalities, making public agendas with new governance approaches fostering innovative collaborations in this field necessary.

Chapter 9 'Higher Education' of the EU-CELAC Action Plan 2015 proposed the development of a future EU-CELAC Common Area of Higher Education and allowed for the intensification of cooperation in different lines of action, which, in turn, resulted in a greater degree of mutual knowledge and trust between the actors involved. Nowadays, topics like digitalisation and internationalisation have become increasingly relevant. Initiatives, such as the European Green Deal and the EU-LAC Digital Alliance have generated additional impetus for the transformation of the education sectors and to provide solid policy advice for the development of both regions.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 4:

- **Prioritising the construction of the 'EU-CELAC Common Area of Higher Education'**
 - Reach governmental consensus to establish an institutional framework and agree on concrete, gradual or progressive steps in the central dimensions of the Common Area of Higher Education (taking as an example the ASEAN-EU SHARE Programme).
 - Intensify the dissemination and endorse platforms that systemise information on the progress made at the bi-regional level, following the example of the 'Matrix of objectives and strategic lines for the construction of the Common Higher Education Area'.
 - Develop calls for proposals to award bi-regional projects or programmes of excellence, e.g., as part of the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ calls.

- Further the integration of a Higher Education space at the LAC level, departing from good practices developed in subregions such as Central America, the MERCOSUR area or the Caribbean region.

2. BI-REGIONAL ALLIANCES AT THE FOREFRONT OF BUILDING EQUAL SOCIETIES

SDG 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

In recent years, many countries in the EU and LAC regions have placed gender equality and programmes to promote equal and open access to public goods and services for all at the centre of their governance as a response to a convulsive international context that threatens advances in women's rights and feminist movements.

It has been widely acknowledged that women's access to and exercise of power are defining elements of democracy and parity. More equal societies that empower women as important actors of change and innovation, imply a deepening of democracy and a significant advancement towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this line, bi-regional cooperation geared towards mainstreaming gender equality across all public policies could foster both regions as leading powers in accomplishing the green, economic, digital and social transitions and sustainable development. In addition, a joint commitment in favour of gender transformative action in common fields of interest, such as climate action, economic prosperity, political leadership, security and peacebuilding, is able to generate a more horizontal, symmetrical, solidarity-based and inclusive EU-LAC cooperation.

In order to construct genuine horizontal, participatory and equal societies, decision-making processes need to incorporate inclusive dialogues, that empower diverse voices. Ensuring intersectionality and diversity in spaces of power is essential to overcome systemic socioeconomic inequalities. Therefore, there is a need to consider specific forms of organisation e.g., of rural, peasant and indigenous communities, as fundamental pillars of development.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 5:

- **Building a bi-regional plan for the promotion of gender equality**
 - Construct a 'Bi-regional Pact for Care' in compliance with the European Care Strategy and the Buenos Aires Commitment that goes beyond state-centrism.
 - Work on a bi-regional commitment to eliminate all forms of gender violence based on the Belém do Pará Convention and the Istanbul Convention.
 - Strengthen regulatory frameworks by establishing democratic standards of transparency and accountability regarding human rights and gender equality in EU-LAC cooperation programmes and bi-regional agreements.
 - Endorse regular fora and spaces like the [EU-LAC Women's International Network](#) for the analysis, exchange and generation of policy recommendations for the EU and CELAC countries, assuring the participation of a diverse spectrum of civil society actors, academia, the private sector and state entities.
 - Design bi-regional feminist training and mentoring programmes around transnational topics to accompany women who are preparing themselves for and who hold leadership positions at community, national, regional and international levels to foster their impact.

- Create bi-regional protection mechanism for women leaders, indigenous people, journalists and human rights defenders in order to guarantee safe environments for their activism and leadership.



3. THE EU AND CELAC ARE EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TRANSITION

SDG 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL.

Cooperation between LAC and the EU in energy matters is an opportunity for joint growth and development and the construction of a more sustainable world. The LAC region is an emerging global power, with key mineral and natural resources to be leveraged in the use of renewable energies such as wind, sun, and water. The region has one of the cleanest energy matrices on the planet and a great capacity to achieve strategic autonomy and become a major energy exporter to the world. However, energy poverty is also a challenge in the region, with 17 million people without access to electricity.¹

On the other hand, the energy transition in Europe has made significant progress, especially in countries with limited fossil fuel resources. Nevertheless, the region remains dependent on natural gas, a circumstance that has become more relevant due to the war in Ukraine. The demand for clean energy sources across EU countries is considerable, and the EU has set itself the goal of achieving zero net carbon emissions by 2050, for which determined financial investments will need to be undertaken.

In this context, there is a high potential for complementarity and a unique opportunity to strengthen social, economic, and environmental relations between both regions while consolidating a sustainable model for development. The European Green Deal, the EU's new energy plan, REPowerEU, and the EU-LAC Global Gateway investment agenda offer new opportunities for relevant and mutually beneficial EU-CELAC collaborations on energy issues with the potential to achieve short- and medium-term energy goals in both regions.

Also in this line, EU-CELAC Heads of State and Government agreed at their third Summit to strengthen investment and cooperation with the aim of achieving closer integration in clean energy supply chains, including critical raw materials and technology transfer. They also acknowledged the potential of the EU-LAC Global Gateway investment agenda to address investment gaps with the goal of mobilising both public funding and private capital for sustainable development, including energy production, environmental perspectives, raw materials, and local value chains.²

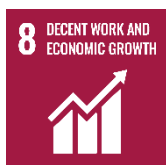
It is crucial to discuss a bi-regional agenda that promotes a just energy transition but avoids creating a new purely extractive relationship between the EU and LAC. The strategic partnership must ensure environmental protection in energy trade in both regions, foster investments linked to the generation of quality jobs and labour rights and promote energy security and the inclusion of vulnerable populations lacking access to electricity and/or sustainable energy services.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 7:

- **Increasing bi-regional technical cooperation and regulatory dialogue on just energy transition**
 - Outline robust bi-regional standards, regulations and mechanisms that ensure environmentally friendly production, traceability, technology transfer and quality employment in minerals trade

¹ OECD, European Commission, CAF, & ECLAC. (2022). Latin American Economic Outlook 2022: Towards a Green and Just Transition. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5554fc-en>

² See Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023 at: <https://eulacfoundation.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2023-07/st12000.en23.pdf>



between the EU and CELAC states (considering existing frameworks such as the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance).

- Strengthen a regional LAC strategy for energy transition by cooperating in the development of regional industrial policies for the energy sector with an emphasis on the change industry patterns and of the development of new markets, such as electric mobility.
 - Ensure respect for indigenous and local communities' rights, including the guarantee of free, prior, and informed consent on mining and energy projects through the application of bi-regional standard and regulations.
- **Strengthening bi-regional financial cooperation and multi-stakeholder investment on just energy transition.**
 - Prioritise the allocation of EU resources and cooperation funds to LAC for a just energy transition linked to the achievements of the SDG, e.g., to ensure access to sustainable energy for all in the LAC region.
 - Prioritise EU-LAC energy cooperation and multi-stakeholder investments that promote LAC participation in value chains and added value production. The bi-regional partnership and its multi-stakeholders should proactively work to ensure fair and balanced agreements that promote technology transfer and enable LAC to participate not only in the extraction of critical raw materials and other natural resources for the energy transition, but also in green production with added value.
 - Foster multi-stakeholder bi-regional dialogues for access and financing just energy transition and sustainable value chains in natural resources and services that LAC provides.
 - Align EU-LAC cooperation mechanisms and programmes with existing and new financing instruments for energy infrastructure.
 - Explore the potential and leverage the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda to address investment gaps with the goal of mobilising both public funding and private capital for sustainable development, including energy production, environmental perspectives, raw materials, and local value chains.

4. INNOVATIVE EU-LAC RELATIONS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE ARE CRITICAL TO MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

SDG 9: BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURES, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALISATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION.

The LAC and EU regions share their interest in collaborating in the realm of science, technology and innovation to develop scientific potential in accordance with economic capability as key instruments for generating social impact and valuable answers for today's challenges.

Similar challenges regarding digital or technological development, health, circular economy, biodiversity, clean energy, social justice, migration, governance and sustainable development leave room for effective multilateral scientific cooperation, where researchers and academics can learn from each other's experiences, and create innovative solutions, progress and bridges for LAC and EU societies.

Since 2014, the development of an EU-CELAC Knowledge Area has facilitated bi-regional cooperation in the fields of science, research, innovation and technology. The Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation has been constructed under four pillars: mobility of researchers, cooperation in research infrastructures, research focused on global challenges, and innovation. Academic and scientific linkages have increased significantly over the past decade. The BELLA programme has been identified as an important tool to deepen joint scientific research, and the new Global Gateway investment framework offers fresh venues for advancing sustainable collaborations in the near future.

As compared to traditional development cooperation, scientific cooperation between both regions tends to be more symmetrical and offers the potential for collaborations on equal footing, which respond to the realities and needs of each country, region and locality under the premise of 'leaving no one behind'. Therefore, the EU-LAC agenda on science, technology and innovation deserves a deeper exploration to deliver proposals to increase productivity, create job opportunities, scale-up smart specialisation and territorially grounded innovation policies, design sustainable value chains and further a development focused on social cohesion and the protection of our ecosystems.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 9:

- **Uplifting the potential of bi-regional scientific collaboration**
 - Maintain a regular policy dialogue on priority issues in which both regions can learn from one another (e.g., open science / open access).
 - Develop and assure continuity of platforms that provide comprehensive information on ongoing bi-regional scientific cooperation programmes and networks.
 - Implement multi-sectoral bi-regional dialogues and enhance public-private partnerships with the involvement of various actors (entrepreneurial sector, SMEs, chambers of commerce, unions, ...).





- Innovate North-South and South-South and triangular cooperation and explore new venues for collaboration (e.g., focussing on 'eco-regions' such as the Amazon)
- Further a paradigm shift and a genuine bi-regional agenda for scientific exchange and mobility within the new 'Development in Transition' framework.
 - Establish mentoring programmes and joint agendas between leading science, technology and innovation institutions to promote new generations of scientists with a bi-regional mindset.
 - Support scientific capacity building in countries where specific needs exist, with a particular focus on the Caribbean due to their vulnerable exposure to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.
 - Work closely together on the definition of common regulatory and ethical frameworks to address emerging challenges in areas such as artificial intelligence, including a gender approach in the regulation of the development of new technologies.
 - Foster the Digital Alliance between CELAC and the EU to reduce digital divides and support the development of the necessary infrastructures to consolidate and expand a digital ecosystem in areas of science, technology, education, and innovation.
- **Advancing the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation (JIRI)**
 - Advance in the implementation of the Strategic Roadmap 2021-2023 by strengthening the 'researcher mobility', 'global challenges' and 'innovation' pillars of the JIRI through an action plan and funding, taking as an example the work undertaken in the 'research infrastructures' pillar.
 - Establish a technical secretariat to follow up on the commitments made in the JIRI-SOM and better coordination between the four pillars.

5. THE EU AND CELAC AS LEADERS OF AMBITIOUS ALLIANCES ON CLIMATE ACTION

SDG 13: TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS.

Without a doubt, today's policies and programmes need to holistically address the environment and the climate and biodiversity crises to achieve sustainability and resilience for the people and the planet. In this line, at the third EU-CELAC Summit, the Heads of State and Government committed to (1) mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation, (2) enhance the cooperation and coordination on climate change and biodiversity loss, (3) ensure the mobilisation of climate finance for adaptation and mitigation for developing countries, and (4) support the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and other relevant international environmental commitments.

Transparency and public access to information on natural resources and environmental impacts, especially at the local level, are essential. Therefore, countries should foster an environment of openness and collaboration, promoting citizen participation and direct financing of affected communities. By strengthening informed decision-making, stronger and more effective environmental governance can be achieved in the EU and LAC regions.

The EU-LAC countries are all signatories of the Paris Agreement and led the creation of the loss and damage fund at COP27 and both regions participate in numerous climate negotiation coalitions worldwide, thus manifesting their will to engage in multilateral climate negotiations with a unified voice. The European Green Deal as strategy designed to tackle the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation yields the possibility to further the EU-CELAC partnership in this regard. In this sense, it is important to strengthen EU-LAC bi-regional dialogue and alliances on green transition and the transformation of the financial system towards strong climate action as catalysts for growth.

To prevent the EU Green Deal regulations and the proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism from being costly and challenging for LAC producers, and therefore, from acting as obstacles to collaboration, joint climate action between the two regions must be accompanied by measures to ensure social justice, generate quality employment, and strengthen international agreements to achieve a successful transition towards a sustainable future.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 13:

- **Bi-regional commitment in the fight against climate change**
 - Develop a bi-regional narrative on a new social contract, that puts at the centre care for life in all its forms, with a development model that restores balance with nature, considering the learnings from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the ILO Convention No. 169 and the Escazú Agreement.
 - Arrange bi-regional multistakeholder dialogue and technical cooperation on environmental certifications and regulations, particularly for small producers, which could open market opportunities and help mitigate potential impacts of measures such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).



- Create European-Latin American and Caribbean gender and climate change working groups to address actions on just and equitable green transitions from a gender and intersectional perspective.

- **Redesign financing of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures**



- Generate quality studies and public information on costs associated with climate change and the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for better accessing climate financing and connecting finance flows and national needs.
- Debate existing and develop new debt-for-climate finance swap mechanisms between EU and LAC countries, ecological debt cancellation and other funding mechanisms for highly indebted countries, especially in the highly vulnerable LAC region.
- Promote multistakeholder dialogue and public-private partnerships in climate finance under sustainable and fair standards that guarantee direct and effective access for local actors in both regions.
- Cooperate to increase climate finance for adaptation in LAC to reduce the region's climate vulnerability.
- Strengthen the local approach to climate finance and highlight the role of affected communities in making decisions, implementing solutions, and directly receiving funding to ensure more effective climate action.
- Implement bi-regional schemes of transparency and accountability mechanisms for collaboration and mutual trust in the EU and LAC climate cooperation.



6. EU-CELAC: A FRESH START FOR BI-REGIONAL COOPERATION

SDG 17: STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALISE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

When jointly aiming at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, a renewed bi-regional agenda should take into account the differences between countries and regions and recognise the need to overcome preconceptions so as to develop transparent and sincere dialogues among nations. For this purpose, a 'change of mentality' is required to lead the bi-regional relationship towards parity. Confronted with the challenges of the multiple transitions, the EU cannot perceive Latin America and the Caribbean merely as a source of raw materials, and traditional ways to cooperate must be complemented through investment and trade relations, which are accompanied by dialogue on public policies, social aspects, adaptation to standards and the treatment of debt.

Inequalities, poverty, infrastructure deficits and environmental problems are all interlinked and need to be addressed when defining global public policies and organising predictable bi-regional dialogue. In this regard, the institutional asymmetry between the EU and CELAC should be considered, as CELAC is not an international organisation, but rather a mechanism for dialogue, and some other sub-regional integration systems in Latin America and the Caribbean have not achieved to advance towards the objectives for which they have been created. As part of the renewal of the agenda, it is, therefore, necessary to learn from processes and initiatives that have not reached an agreement in the past. At the same time, the diverse actors should steer their programmes and resources with their different approaches towards common interests and goals to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, as proposed, for instance, by the Global Gateway initiative.

The bi-regional relationship should involve all member countries in both regions, wherefore it is important to make the presence and needs of the less apparent European and Caribbean countries visible, in order to recover the interests of these sub-regions and undertake joint actions and solutions appropriate to their specific realities.

KEY ACTIONS TO STEP UP BI-REGIONAL COLLABORATION AIMED AT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 17:

- **Reinventing the bi-regional agenda in multilateral spaces**
 - Establish a clear and specific roadmap to follow-up on the Summit, displaying high-level commitments, instruments and indicators of inter-institutional coordination to fulfil them, including periodic meetings.
 - Found bi-regional policy working groups on trade agreements and their alignment with global regulatory issues to carry out periodic consultative programming, technical training and political dialogue so as to better respond to shared interests.
 - Foster cooperation and articulation between international intergovernmental organisations through the creation of a multilateral network for the exchange of methodologies and initiatives linked to financing, policies and social aspects of the bi-regional agenda.
 - Facilitate regular (bi)regional spaces for the discussion of public policy reforms to promote and increase investment connected to national development strategies and in favour of a productive, industrial and sustainable transformation of the economies.

- Enhance spaces at the (sub)regional EU and LAC levels, that allow key strategic sectors for regional integration to be addressed.
- Carry out regular civil society dialogues to discuss the cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union.

